Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy

Adrian Johnston

# Time Driven

## Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive

Foreword by
Slavoj Žižek

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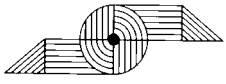

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For my family

In the world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.

—Oscar Wilde

We never keep to the present. We recall the past; we anticipate the future as if we found it too slow in coming and were trying to hurry it up, or we recall the past as if to stay its too rapid flight. We are so unwise that we wander about in times that do not belong to us, and do not think of the only one that does; so vain that we dream of times that are not and blindly flee the one that is. The fact is that the present usually hurts. We thrust it out of sight because it distresses us, and if we find it enjoyable, we are sorry to see it slip away. We try to give it the support of the future, and think how we are going to arrange things over which we have no control for a time we can never be sure of reaching. Let each of us examine his thoughts; he will find them wholly concerned with the past or the future. We almost never think of the present, and if we do think of it, it is only to see what light it throws on our plans for the future. The present is never our end. The past and the present are our means, the future alone our end. Thus we never actually live, but hope to live, and since we are always planning how to be happy, we should never be so.

—Blaise Pascal

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# Foreword: A Parallax View on Drives

In Leonardo's *Mona Lisa,* there is a strange discrepancy between the figure of Mona Lisa and the complex, almost Gothic, background of trees, rocks, etc. It is as if, effectively, Mona Lisa stands in front of a painted background, not in a real environs: the painted background stands for the void which is filled in with painting. Does this same discrepancy not account also for the strange attraction of the old Hollywood films from 30s and 40s in which actors are so obviously acting in front of a projected background? Recall the systematic use of this device in Hitchcock: Ingrid Bergman skiing down a mountain slope in front of a ridiculously discrepant snowy background in *Spellbound;* Bergman again, driving a car in a studio with the uncoordinated background of a night landscape passing by in *Notorious;* and exemplary cases from the late Hitchcock of the dining car table conversation between Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint, with a Hudson Bay background in which we pass three times the same barn in *North by Northwest,* and of Tippi Hedren riding a horse in *Marnie.* Although it is easy to project a conscious strategy into what may have been Hitchcock's simple sloppiness, it is difficult to deny the psychological resonance of these shots, as if the very discord between figure and background renders a key message about the depicted person's subjectivity. It was above all Orson Welles who perfected the expressive use of this technique: one of his standard shots is the American shot of the hero too close to the camera, with the blurred background which, even if it is a "true" background, nonetheless generates the effect of something artificial, acquiring a spectral dimension, as if the hero is not moving in a real world, but in a phantasmagoric virtual universe. . . . And does the same not go for modern subjectivity? Perhaps it is a crucial fact that Mona Lisa was painted at the dawn of modernity: this irreducible gap between the subject and its "background," the fact that a subject never fully fits its environs, is never fully embedded in it, defines subjectivity. It is this structural discrepancy constitutive of subjectivity that is at the very core of Adrian Johnston's book. And since it was Immanuel Kant who fully articulated this discrepancy, the book cannot but be focused on Kant's philosophy.

The predominant reference to Kant in contemporary philosophy is

not a very promising one. The latest ethical "crisis" apropos biogenetics created the need for what one is fully justified in calling a "state philosophy": a philosophy that would, on the one hand, condone scientific research and technical process, and, on the other hand, contain its full socio-symbolic impact, that is, prevent it from posing a threat to the existing theologico-ethical constellation. No wonder those who come closest to meeting these demands are neo-Kantians (from Habermas in Germany to Luc Ferry in France, who is now effectively a state functionary, a minister of education!): Kant himself already dealt with the problem of guaranteeing, while fully taking into account the Newtonian science, that there is a space of ethical responsibility exempted from the reach of science. That is, as Kant himself put it, he limited the scope of knowledge to create the space for faith and morality. And are today's state philosophers not facing the same task? Is their effort not focused on how, through different versions of transcendental reflection, to restrict science to its preordained horizon of meaning and thus to denounce as "illegitimate" its consequences for the ethico-religious sphere?

It is deeply significant that the main challenge to this predominant use of Kant is coming from philosophers who rely on psychoanalysis, especially in its Lacanian version—apart from Johnston himself, one should mention at least three more names, all of them women: Alenka Zupančič, Joan Copjec, and Monique David-Ménard. The specific twist that Johnston gives to this topic is his focus on temporality as the ultimate horizon of the Freudian notion of drive. The central role of temporality was elaborated already by Jean Laplanche who, in his reading of the impasses of the Freudian topic of seduction, effectively reproduces the precise structure of a Kantian antinomy. On the one hand, there is the brutal empirical realism of the parental seduction: the ultimate cause of later traumas and pathologies is that children effectively were seduced and molested by adults; on the other hand, there is the (in)famous reduction of the seduction scene to the patient's fantasy. As Laplanche points out, the ultimate irony is that the dismissal of seduction as fantasy passes today for the "realistic" stance, while those who insist on the reality of seduction end up advocating all kinds of molestations, up to satanic rites and extraterrestrial harassments. . . . Laplanche's solution is precisely the transcendental one: while "seduction" cannot be reduced just to the subject's fantasy—while it does refer to a traumatic encounter with the other's "enigmatic message," bearing witness to the other's unconscious—it also cannot be reduced to an event in the reality of the actual interaction between the child and his/her adults. Seduction is rather a kind of transcendental structure, the minimal a priori formal constellation of the child confronted with the impenetrable acts of the Other which bear witness to the

Other's unconscious—and we are never dealing here with simple "facts," but always with facts located into the space of indeterminacy between "too soon" and "too late." The child is originally helpless, thrown into the world when unable to take care of itself—his/her surviving skills develop too late; at the same time, the encounter of the sexualized Other always, by a structural necessity, comes "too soon"—as an unexpected shock which cannot ever be properly symbolized, translated into the universe of meaning. The fact of seduction is thus that of the Kantian transcendental X, a structurally necessary transcendental illusion.

When we are confronted with an antinomic stance in the precise Kantian sense of the term, one should renounce all attempts to reduce one aspect to the other (or, even more, to enact a kind of "dialectical synthesis" of the opposites). One should, on the contrary, assert antinomy as irreducible, and conceive the point of radical critique not as a certain determinate position as opposed to another position, but as the irreducible gap between the positions itself, the purely structural interstice between them. The Kantian *Ding an sich* (the Thing-in-itself, beyond phenomena) is not simply a transcendental entity beyond our grasp, but something discernible only via the irreducibly antinomic character of our experience of reality. (And, as René Girard pointed out, is not the first full assertion of the ethical parallax the Book of Job, in which the two perspectives—the divine order of the world and Job's complaint—are confronted, and neither is the "truthful" one? The truth resides in their very gap, in the shift of perspective.)

Let us take Kant's confrontation with the epistemological antinomy that characterized his epoch: empiricism versus rationalism. Kant's solution is neither to choose one of the terms, nor to enact a kind of higher "synthesis" which would "sublate" the two as unilateral, as partial moments of a global truth (nor, of course, does he withdraw to pure skepticism); the stake of his "transcendental turn" is precisely to avoid the need to formulate one's own "positive" solution. What Kant does is to change the very terms of the debate; his solution—the transcendental turn—is unique in that it, first, rejects any ontological closure: it recognizes a certain fundamental and irreducible limitation ("finitude") of the human condition, which is why the two poles, rational and sensual, active and passive, cannot ever be fully mediated-reconciled. The "synthesis" of the two dimensions—that is, the fact that our Reason seems to fit the structure of external reality that affects us—always relies on a certain *salto mortale* or "leap of faith." Far from designating a "synthesis" of the two dimensions, the Kantian "transcendental" rather stands for their irreducible gap "as such": the "transcendental" points at something in this gap, a new dimension which cannot be reduced to any of the two positive terms between which

the gap is gaping. And Kant does the same with regard to the antinomy between the Cartesian cogito as res cogitans, the "thinking substance," a self-identical positive entity, and Hume's dissolution of the subject in the multitude of fleeting impressions: against both positions, he asserts the subject of transcendental apperception which, while displaying a self-reflective unity irreducible to the empirical multitude, nonetheless lacks any substantial positive being, such that it is in no way a res cogitans.

Perhaps, the best way to describe the Kantian break towards this new dimension is with regard to the changed status of the notion of the "inhuman." Kant introduced a key distinction between negative and indefinite judgment: the positive judgment "the soul is mortal" can be negated in two ways, when a predicate is denied to the subject ("the soul is not mortal"), and when a non-predicate is affirmed ("the soul is non-mortal"). The difference is exactly the same as the one, known to every reader of Stephen King, between "he is not dead" and "he is un-dead." The indefinite judgment opens up a third domain, which undermines the underlying distinction: the "undead" are neither alive nor dead, they are precisely the monstrous "living dead." And the same goes for "inhuman": "he is not human" is not the same as "he is inhuman"—"he is not human" means simply that he is external to humanity, animal or divine; while "he is inhuman" means something thoroughly different, namely that he is neither human nor inhuman, but marked by a terrifying excess which, although it negates what we understand as "humanity," is inherent to being human. And, perhaps, one should risk the hypothesis that this is what changes with the Kantian revolution: in the pre-Kantian universe, humans were simply humans, beings of reason, fighting the excesses of animal lusts and divine madness, while only with Kant and German Idealism is the excess to be fought absolutely immanent, the very core of subjectivity itself (which is why, with German Idealism, the metaphor for the core of subjectivity is Night, "Night of the World," in contrast to the Enlightenment notion of the Light of Reason fighting the darkness around). So when, in the pre-Kantian universe, a hero goes mad, it means he is deprived of his humanity, that is, the animal passions or divine madness took over; while with Kant, madness signals the unconstrained explosion of the very core of a human being.

Which, then, is this new dimension that emerges in the gap itself? It is that of the transcendental I itself, of its "spontaneity": the ultimate parallax, the third space between phenomena and noumenon itself, is the subject's freedom/spontaneity, which—although, of course, it is not the property of a phenomenal entity, so that it cannot be dismissed as a false appearance which conceals the noumenal fact that we are totally caught in an inaccessible necessity—is also not simply noumenal. And Johnston's

book is a detailed perspicuous elaboration of the consequences for psychoanalytic theory of this most radical dimension of the Kantian breakthrough. He takes literally Lacan's claim that Kant's philosophy was the initial moment in the line of thought which led to Freud's discovery—Lacan's own "return to Freud" could be read precisely as an elevation of Freud to the dignity of a philosopher, as the reading of Freud's metapsychology as a "critique of pure desire." And, as in the case of Kant himself, the ethical consequences of this "return" are shattering. Traditionally, psychoanalysis was expected to allow the patient to overcome the obstacles which prevented him/her access to "normal" sexual enjoyment. Today, however, when we are bombarded from all sides by the different versions of the superego injunction "Enjoy!"—from direct enjoyment in sexual performance to enjoyment in professional achievement or in spiritual awakening—one should move to a more radical level: psychoanalysis is today the only discourse in which you are allowed NOT to enjoy (as opposed to "not allowed to enjoy").

Along the same lines, instead of ordering everyone to read Johnston's admirable book, I am tempted to conclude with: you are allowed NOT to read it—at your own risk of missing one of the few true intellectual adventures in today's academia.

Slavoj Žižek

# Preface: The Unbearable Burden of Libidinal Liberation

In many minds, Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex* encapsulates the essence of the Freudian discovery of the unconscious. For both Freud and his interpreters, the figure of Oedipus represents the position of the libidinal individual, an individual burdened with desires that run counter to both the conscious sense of self as well as the interdictions of social reality. According to Freud, the acts that Oedipus inadvertently commits are exactly what every subject's repressed unconscious wishes to realize. Various mechanisms, including the ego, the super-ego, castration anxiety, and neurotic symptoms, are mobilized in the perpetual effort to subdue and control the parricidal, incestuous urges lurking in the deepest recesses of the seething cauldron of the id.

Are the parricidal and incestuous acts of Oedipus the sole features of Sophocles' tragedy relevant to psychoanalytic theory? Perhaps this question is best answered by first inquiring as to what exactly makes Sophocles' drama a tragedy. Freud observes that the conventional explanation as to why Oedipus's plight has a tragic resonance is that it portrays the human individual's relative helplessness in comparison with the forces of destiny.[1] Oedipus is impotent in the face of fate. Prior to killing his father and marrying his mother, oracles warn him that he will indeed commit such atrocities. Of course, Oedipus, upon hearing this prediction, intends to do everything in his power to avoid this terrible future. Ironically, his very efforts aimed at steering clear of this foretold fate lead him inexorably along the path toward the fulfillment of his inevitable destiny. Unknowingly, Oedipus slaughters his father along a roadway, and, upon arriving in Thebes, assumes his slain father's place; all the while, he is utterly ignorant of what he has done (in the subsequent play, *Oedipus at Colonus,* Oedipus's deeds are described, from the vantage point of hindsight, as "unconscious," that is, in this case, inadvertently realized in total ignorance).[2]

Freud contends that the "victim of fate" theme isn't the real reason why *Oedipus Rex* holds the spectator's attention. The fascination with this ancient, mythical figure is sustained not so much by the formal thematic qualities of the drama, but by the alleged fact that Oedipus's acts stage the

direct fulfillment of each and every human individual's most powerful repressed wishes. The libidinal economies of all subjects, in Freud's view, are configured through a template originating in childhood, a template structured in and by the organization of the familial order. Early "family romances," although subsequently rendered unconscious, never cease to govern the vicissitudes of the drives. Thus, according to the Freudian account, Sophocles' tragedy has an eternal attraction for audiences since everyone can identify with Oedipus insofar as he embodies a direct "living out of the drives," an uninhibited realization of everyone's most fundamental desires.[3]

What happens if one accepts Freud's claim that Oedipus's actions represent the universal repressed wishes of all individuals and, in so doing, re-reads *Oedipus Rex* from a psychoanalytic point of view, a view in which Oedipus himself would be subsumed under the governance of the complex bearing his name? What if, contrary to a received critical wisdom that accuses Freud of reading too much psychoanalytic theory back into Sophocles' text, Freud's interpretation of this play isn't, for certain reasons, psychoanalytic enough? In other words, what if, against reigning exegetical sensibilities, one assumes that Oedipus isn't just an emblem of the libidinal individual, but himself is an Oedipalized subject? In short, this would amount to asserting that Oedipus succeeds, even if this success is inadvertent, in living out his drives. In a violent *passage à l'acte,* Oedipus, as it were, turns his unconscious inside out; he makes manifest, in the broad daylight of external reality, what almost always remains eternally condemned to the nocturnal darkness of repression. Through reinterpreting *Oedipus Rex* vis-à-vis the assumption that Oedipus himself is an individual constituted as per Freud's analytic theorizations about the general features of the human psyche, new light can be shed on Sophocles' tragedy as well as psychoanalytic metapsychology itself.

Common Freudian *doxa*—particularly as inspired by the second topography's theory of civilization and "instinctual renunciation"—tacitly suggests that Oedipus, to the extent that he manages to overcome the repression of his primordial drives, gains access to an enjoyment beyond the mitigating influences of egocentric sublimation and socio-cultural norms. He tastes a forbidden fruit lusted after by everyone but rarely obtained by anyone. As such, shouldn't Oedipus be the epitome of a non-neurotic individual? Isn't this a subject who, despite his lack of self-awareness throughout his preordained itinerary, doesn't "give way on his desire"? From what Freud states about the relationships between the drives, civilization, and the pleasure-versus-reality dichotomy, one would expect that those who succeed in transgressing the restrictions placed upon their libidinal economies without suffering direct retributions from

external forces would be happiest (one should observe here that nobody immediately rushes to punish Oedipus—he chooses to punish himself). And yet, what does the conclusion of *Oedipus Rex* portray?

Up until the end of the play, Oedipus isn't cognizant of what he has actually done in the past. He lacks the self-conscious awareness that, at the level of his factual, empirical life history, he has already fulfilled the horrific prophecies that he ardently sought to circumvent. The realization of his "Oedipal wishes" remains unconscious, or, more specifically, asubjective. (Put differently, Oedipus has yet to "subjectivize" his past actions by consciously realizing their genuine import.) In the concluding moments of the drama, Oedipus finally comes to realize what is, by that point, an irreversible fait accompli: Without knowing what he was doing, he killed his father and slept with his mother. The second moment, in which Oedipus subjectivizes his past actions by comprehending their implicit significance, works analogously to what Freud identifies in the traumatic experience of "deferred action" (*Nachträglichkeit*). But, if Freud's theses about unconscious desire are correct, the play's end amounts to Oedipus comprehending that he has succeeded in actualizing his own most repressed wishes. And, when he indeed does reach an understanding of this fact, the result isn't his rejoicing in an achieved libidinal liberation. He hardly feels elated at having transgressed the various obstacles and barriers that usually keep one's family-conditioned impulses at bay.

On the contrary, Oedipus is utterly crushed by the deferred comprehension of his acts. Strangely enough, he assumes responsibility for his past. In spite of the fact that his ignorance while committing the foretold deeds provides him with a legitimate alibi exonerating him from being truly culpable of intentionally ruining his family—given his efforts to avoid his fate, Oedipus's conscious good intentions are beyond reproach—Oedipus nonetheless freely assumes the guilt for his prior deeds. Instead of understandably pardoning himself in this situation, Oedipus tears his own eyes out and exiles himself from the city in which he ruled as the beloved monarch (subsequently, in *Oedipus at Colonus,* Oedipus belatedly pardons himself by appealing to the unconscious status of his actions at the time when they were performed). The psychoanalyst, when confronted with an analysand's seemingly unwarranted feelings of guilt, doesn't automatically dismiss them as unjustified and irrational. In all likelihood, the patient is indeed guilty of something, of crimes committed in the jurisdiction of unconscious fantasy-life. So, shouldn't Oedipus's apparently odd acceptance of culpable responsibility for his ostensibly inadvertent misdeeds signal a secret libidinal-fantasmatic complicity cemented in place by repressed desires, desires which the super-ego refuses to distinguish from actually accomplished acts?

Oedipus lived out his drives, only to find that he was horribly traumatized by the actualization of these unconscious forces. Part of what makes *Oedipus Rex* tragic is, therefore, not simply the representation of certain of humanity's lowest common libidinal denominators—denominators allowing for a sort of timeless, trans-historical identification with the figure of Oedipus by the audience (as alleged by Freud's reading of Sophocles). The truly tragic dimension of Sophocles' play, from a properly formulated psychoanalytic perspective, is the lesson that the removal of the repressions and inhibitions holding *Trieb* in check doesn't open out onto an ecstatic, Dionysian release of *jouissance*. What makes Oedipus emblematic of all subjects isn't just that he manifests the hidden wishes of the individual as conditioned by the general structure of the socio-symbolic unit of the family, but that he depicts how transgressively "overcoming" the impediments to the drives doesn't enable one to simply enjoy enjoyment. The Oedipal victories lusted after by the psyche are always, if and when achieved, somewhat Pyrrhic.

The tragedy facing human beings is that the lifting of the repressive mechanisms of an *Umwelt* (apparently opposing the drives of a libidinal *Innenwelt*) promises an ideal enjoyment yet-to-come that, when really effectuated, is repulsive and terrifying. Oedipus plays out the repressed script of his family romance, and, in coming to understand his unconscious "success," wants never to look upon the world with seeing eyes again. Likewise, one of Freud's own self-invented myths illustrates the same dynamic. In *Totem and Taboo,* Freud tells the story of an archaic human order in which a single alpha male (the "primal father") tyrannically rules over the social group (the "primal horde"). This powerful, ferocious paternal figure monopolizes all the women of the horde, preventing the other males, this "band of brothers," from indulging themselves in their sexual urges. The subjugated male members of the group finally rise up in rebellion against the feared *Urvater,* slaughtering him and subsequently devouring his corpse. On the one hand, the brothers hated the father because he hindered the exercise of their desires—and this hatred eventually became intense enough to drive the group to murder. On the other hand, insofar as the father was envied because he occupied the very position desired by each of the brothers, this paternal figure represents a point of identification for the other males—and the cannibalistic consumption of the dead father's body is, in Freud's mind, indicative of this identificatory rapport. Freud describes this oscillation between hatred and identification as "ambivalence."[4]

Like Oedipus, the brothers of the primal horde accomplish in act what most subjects merely entertain in (unconscious) fantasies. But, in Freud's tale as opposed to Sophocles' tragedy, the actors know full well

what they are doing the entire time. The brothers deliberately cooperate with each other in murdering the primal father; no ignorance clouds their awareness of this forceful assertion of their drives. However, just as Oedipus is incapable of embracing the actualization of his repressed desires, so is the primal horde profoundly disturbed by its deed. (The story of Electra resembles the Freudian myth of the horde to the extent that, although throughout the course of the play Electra wants nothing more than to avenge her dead father by killing her adulterous mother, she is nonetheless traumatized by her own murderous act once she commits it.)[5]

What is the ultimate result of the elimination of the living primal father? Instead of the brothers finally savoring their newly-won freedom from the oppressive regime of the selfish paternal dictator (as one might reasonably expect them to do), they are so distressed by what they have accomplished that they subsequently establish laws prohibiting anyone from ever acting again as they did. The vanquished father's ghost returns to haunt them in the form of a restrictive body of laws; just as the living father inhibits aggression and the free circulation of women, so too do the laws established between the band of brothers after-the-fact of their violent acts of revolt condemn these same acts. Libidinal liberation, as the lifting of supposedly external impediments to *Trieb,* isn't so easy to achieve. Whether as the traumatizing deferred comprehension of Oedipus or the spectral paternal remainder haunting the fraternal band, something more than just externally imposed repression (father, society, and so on) prevents subjects from experiencing pleasure in the release of their formerly stifled tendencies. In fact, the myth of the primal horde represents Freud's displaced realization of the painful truth of the analytically appropriated myth of Oedipus, a truth with which he repeatedly fails to fully come to terms.

A hitch, obstacle, or impediment beyond the recognizable avatars of the Freudian reality principle interferes with the enjoyment of the libidinal economy. The foundational myths of psychoanalysis reveal more than just the existence of certain common desires dwelling within the unconscious lives of each and every individual. These tales of transgression, in which the actors realize the primordial versions of the drives in the field of concrete reality, demonstrate that the allure of such transgressions is sustained strictly insofar as these actions have yet to be accomplished. Once committed, that is, once drive is transformed from repressed fantasy to actualized fact, the attractiveness of what ostensibly is desired by the unconscious is suddenly transubstantiated into something horrific and disgusting. If *Oedipus Rex* is indeed timelessly tragic, this is due to his representation of the foundational dilemma of the drives—a dilemma in which *Trieb* paradoxically "enjoys" what it desires exclusively to the extent

that it never accomplishes the fulfillment of its desire. The drives are not repressed simply because they are at odds with the reality of a socio-legal *Umwelt*. Even if every external impediment were eliminated, the drives would spontaneously fabricate their own repression in order to preserve their fantasmatic forms of *jouissance*. Obtaining this *jouissance* would be the ultimate trauma for *Trieb*.

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Introduction

# The Critique of Pure Enjoyment, or *Jouissance* Does Not Exist

One of the most basic insights of psychoanalysis is that human beings say more than they know. Their various utterances and behaviors are significantly shaped by an unconscious dimension woven into the fabric of their awareness. Accordingly, the art of analysis doesn't involve dogmatically disregarding the manifest features of quotidian existence in favor of groping about in search of some dark and hidden psychical underbelly; it isn't a vulgar depth psychology in which the superficial structured façade of sociosymbolically mediated cognition is crudely opposed to the murky and opaque bog of a fleshly nature in its wild, untamed essence. The unconscious is "out there," inscribed within the field of consciousness and its correlative reality as a set of internally excluded configurations. And these configurations, rather than being relatively superfluous parasitical supplements or marginalities, lend this reality its very texture and determine the actual contours of consciousness itself.

Consequently, isn't it possible that common sense, so to speak, knows more than it knows? In the wake of Freud (especially in terms of his "psychopathology of everyday life"), shouldn't a research program be forged that would entail, among other activities, taking hackneyed bits of popular wisdom much more literally and seriously than this "wisdom" takes itself when, with mechanically thoughtless nonchalance, it casually rolls off someone's lips? Likewise, the conclusions reached by a complex theoretical endeavor need not be of an intangibly abstract, counterintuitive sort. Although philosophical and psychoanalytic systems of thought obviously depart from familiar patterns of understanding, thereby rising above the limitations imposed by unsophisticated epistemological habits and assumptions, the results achieved by these theoretical apparatuses should dovetail with (rather than automatically contradict and condescendingly condemn) the banal, everyday world out of which

they arise and which they should seek to elucidate. Furthermore, intuitive conclusions often, in the course of being theoretically explicated and justified, require the most counter-intuitive of premises, the most contorted of conceptual acrobatics—the means are frequently more informative than the end. Indeed, as with human desire itself, the movement of the journey might be more important than the goal of the destination.

One way of understanding the present project is as a rigorously systematic unfolding of the excessive, almost unbearable implications contained within the cliché remark, "the grass is always greener on the other side." Here—as likely holds with many other such interminably repeated remarks—the speaker speaks more truth than she/he realizes, remaining unaware that this cliché describes what amounts to, in Kantian terms, a necessary "transcendental illusion" shaping psychical life as a whole. In lieu of actually obtainable forms of lasting satisfaction, unperturbed contentment, and enduring happiness—psychoanalysis is, sometimes despite itself and the aims of its clinical mission, fundamentally antiutopian—human beings stubbornly cling to fantasies in which this enjoyment is displaced onto an "other side" pathetically romanticized as a paradise lost, vainly awaited as a perpetually deferred future, and/or jealously attributed to others (the Hegelian message transmitted from analyst to analysand in the course of the cure should hence proclaim that, "You have nothing to lose but this loss itself!"). These fantasies of a phantom enjoyment can be nostalgic, messianic, or simply paranoid. This universal feature of the human psychical condition, as with all psychoanalytic symptoms, is a compromise formation. On the one hand, such fantasies of impossible *jouissance* enable individuals to bear the burden of the dissatisfactions stemming from a constitutional discontent by making this less than ideal state of affairs seem contingent rather than necessary. On the other hand, this same strategy risks further amplifying the pain of an inherently dysfunctional libidinal economy by cultivating the conviction in individuals that their suffering is terribly exceptional and gratuitous. People unknowingly rub salt in their own wounds. Psychoanalysis cannot therapeutically heal these wounds, but in the best of cases it can get its patients to stop rubbing in so much salt and to cease picking, in morbid fascination, at the permanent scabs and scars left behind by a history of invariably thwarted expectations.

In short, what follows is a critique of pure enjoyment. Kant's self-described "Copernican" revolutionizing of philosophy, *à la* the critical–transcendental turn, accomplishes nothing less than the redefinition of the very field of philosophy; by rendering certain problems and questions hopelessly obsolete, it presents philosophical thought with a new agenda

based on a careful consideration of the theoretical ambitions that can reasonably be harbored by future investigators. In liquidating false problems and unanswerable questions, Kant liberates philosophical inquiry, freeing it to commit itself to the pursuit of genuine, worthwhile enigmas. Similarly, unmasking the enthralling, fantasmatic illusions of "pure enjoyment"—of various utopian visions of breakthroughs into hitherto unseen higher levels of achievable happiness—promises to prompt both philosophy and psychoanalysis into reconsidering their assessments of human nature and its capacity to be transformed as well as to help free suffering people from unwitting, self-imposed enslavement to impossible standards of imagined well-being that nobody really possesses. The path forward towards a revitalized philosophical and psychoanalytic delineation of subjectivity opens up exclusively through the liberating acceptance of and fidelity to the utterly scandalous declaration of Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalytic metapsychology: There is no such thing as full, pure enjoyment—*La jouissance n'existe pas.*

## The Seven Central Theses of the Project

### 1. *Psychoanalysis is, fundamentally, a philosophical insight into the subject's relationships with temporality.*

Like any relatively nuanced system of ideas, psychoanalysis means different things to different people. For many, Freud daringly breaks the taboos of Victorian society at the beginning of the twentieth century, thereby permitting the recognition that the foundations of subjective existence reside in repudiated and repressed sexuality. For others, analytic theory is a handy tool for dissecting cultural objects ranging from literature to film to politics. And in the eyes of quite a few people, psychoanalysis is a deranged, pseudoscientific monstrosity produced by a singly troubled mind. The genuine foundations of psychoanalysis lie elsewhere.

In essence, what Freud discovers—but fails to fully apprehend with respect to his discovery—is that the human subject's relationship to temporality is absolutely central in molding its very being. Freud misrecognizes the implications of his own thought with regard to this topic. He construes the unconscious's continual establishment of links between the past and the present as merely indicative of its "timelessness." The only alternative he perceives to a form of consciousness organized around linear, chronological time is the complete negation or absence of time. The

idea of a difference or conflict between distinct modes of temporality eludes Freud. The consequences of this false Freudian dilemma between conscious linear time and unconscious timelessness are far reaching.

Often, if time is discussed at all in the context of psychoanalytic theory, what receives stress is merely the deterministic influence of the repressed past (basically, the idea that the past overdetermines the present). But in addition to this vector of overdetermination, analytic theory also reveals two other related temporal dynamics: One, the genetic (or, one could say, diachronic–historical) nature of subjectivity per se—that is, the features of the cognizing subject historically take shape through a series of processes capable of being delineated as general ordered dynamics vis-à-vis the foundational concepts of metapsychology. And, two, the reciprocal influence of the present on the past—Freud uncovers the reorganizing "re-transcription" of past ideational contents through such phenomena as screen memories, the day-residues of the dream-work, and two-event traumas; both Lacan and Jean Laplanche explore this retroactive dimension of psychical life in their motif of the *"après-coup."*

### 2. *Drives are internally differentiated mechanisms.*

The Freudian concept of *Trieb* ("drive") designates a complex, multifaceted structure—a heterogeneous conjunction of distinctive elements and functions—rather than a homogenous energetic force, a quota of raw natural impulse, or a simple somatic urge (these being common characterizations of *Trieb*). In his crucial 1915 essay "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," Freud stipulates that any drive is by definition a composite of what he terms a "source" (*Quelle*), "pressure" (*Drang*), "aim" (*Ziel*), and "object" (*Objekt*); in this same essay, of course, he famously remarks that *Trieb* resides somewhere "between soma and psyche." Unfortunately, in his later writings, Freud, although retaining this metapsychological definition, neglects its significant implications for the problems in response to which he forges the second topography (with its opposition between *Eros* and *Todestrieb*). His post-1920 texts frequently lapse into portraying drives as bodily inclinations welling up from the seething cauldron of the id.

As with his cursory treatment of temporality, Freud's failure to further investigate the internally differentiated structure of *Trieb* as a foundational metapsychological concept costs him dearly. He loses the power to explain many of the puzzling phenomena plaguing him all the way through his final writings of the late 1930s—that is to say, evidence of a "beyond" to the pleasure principle. Freud never manages to reap the benefits of his shockingly unprecedented revelation that the basic forces

and impulsions of human nature are themselves hybrid entities consisting of multiple (and, in many ways, opposed) components. This dimension of his discoveries remains, for him, partially unconscious.

3. *All drives, in their very structure, are split drives.*

The decisive thesis of this project emerges from the two preceding theses: An intractable conflict between two incompatible temporal orders is intrinsic to the anatomy of *Trieb*. In other words, all drives are internally rent by a constitutive antagonism guaranteeing their repeated failure to achieve what Freud calls "satisfaction" and what Lacan calls *jouissance* ("enjoyment"). Each drive is a self-sabotaging mechanism, or, one could say, a perpetual frustration machine. The insight into the tension between these two temporal orders requires the gesture of "splitting the drive."

Why haven't previous thinkers uncovered this internal *Spaltung* within the multifaceted organization of *Trieb*? In all likelihood, this is because so much intellectual attention has been paid to the "split subject" of psychoanalysis. For the most part, the impact of Freud's theory of the unconscious on philosophical thought has been assessed in terms of subjectivity; the received consensus concerning this topic never tires of reiterating how psychoanalysis challenges the primacy of self-consciousness ostensibly asserted by the Enlightenment tradition. Because of this focus on the splitting of subjectivity, a careful philosophical reassessment of other important features of analytic metapsychology has been neglected (features with a direct bearing on any philosophical–psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity). In fact, in conjunction with the emphasis on the split subject, the conceptual complexity of *Trieb* is usually sacrificed in a hasty move that treats drives as nothing more than vaguely defined unconscious entities—fluid libidinal energies perturbing the conscious ego. This view is much too facile.

4. *The constitutive antagonism within drives is temporal in nature.*

The dehiscence internal to drive involves two axes—an "axis of iteration" and an "axis of alteration." The axis of iteration consists of the drive-source (the regularly repeated demand for satisfaction issued by the drive) and the drive-pressure (the displeasure or anxiety accompanying an unmet demand of the drive-source, namely, the negative affective avatar of the drive-source). By contrast, the axis of alteration consists of the drive-aim (the achievement of the satisfaction demanded by the drive-

source, or, put differently, the reduction of the tensions experienced as a result of the drive-pressure) and the drive-object (the "ideational representative" of the drive, the mnemic traces of privileged object-choices influencing the various vicissitudes of the drive). Freud portrays the meeting place of these four constituents of *Trieb* as a realm between soma and psyche. However, what does time/temporality have to do with all of this?

At the broadest of levels, psychoanalysis contains within itself an unresolved tension. On the one hand, it advances a deterministic schema wherein the past shapes the present and, due to the essentially repetitive nature of the libidinal economy, nothing ever really changes for the subject once a certain number of ontogenetic factors are in place (the notions of "repetition compulsion" and the "return of the repressed" clearly reveal this assumption). On the other hand, in terms of its larger philosophical significance, psychoanalysis adds further weight to the contention that subjectivity is a genetically emerging phenomenon, that the very subjective relation to objective reality undergoes a diachronically unfolding series of decisive metamorphoses (for instance, Lacan's *objet petit a* as the always–already lost object of the drives is, at root, testimony to this importance for analysis of the losses explained strictly by assuming these metamorphoses of subjectivity's structuration). Seen from a properly formulated psychoanalytic perspective, human existence is simultaneously inscribed in several temporal registers: The individual's ontogenetic life history records itself on different temporal tracks; and, these tracks run at varying speeds, always remaining disharmoniously out of synch with each other.

In the "Antinomies of Pure Reason" (from the *Critique of Pure Reason*), Kant claims to demonstrate that a gap forever separates cognition from thing, the thinking subject from the *Ding an sich.* If metaphysics contains within itself interminable conflicts and contradictions, then thought must be distinct from its object, since objects, naturally, cannot contain contradictions. Hegel's well-known response, in the *Logic,* is that Kant comes close to the truth, but misses the mark by refusing to recognize in his discovery of these antinomies the very conflicts and contradictions forming objective reality per se—and not just the inadequacies of a self-enclosed, solipsistic subject trapped in the prison house of its own cognition. The point of the juxtaposition of the apparent Freudian theoretical inconsistency of repetition-versus-becoming with the internally antagonistic dynamic of the split drive is similar to Hegel's argumentative strategy with respect to Kant. The cyclical, repetitious (a)temporality of the axis of iteration demands the "eternal return of the same form of satisfaction"—the recovery of the initial representative drive-object in its unmodified past form; and this demand is itself utterly impossible for the

axis of alteration to fulfill, since the experientially constituted object is constantly shifting correlative to the transformations of the subjective framework mediating the experiential field. The Hegelian twist lies in claiming that the dehiscence between quasi-somatic repetition and representational, ideational becoming isn't a contradiction indicative of the inadequacy of psychoanalytic thought with respect to its external object of investigation. Rather, this conflict between temporal orders is nothing other than the reality of *Trieb*.

5. *Drives are inherently incapable of obtaining their own aims.*

Aim-inhibition is not, as is usually observed, solely the outcome of the superimposition of an extraneous matrix of governing conditions upon the drives. Instead, aim-inhibition is, first and foremost, a by-product of the uncorrectable mismatch between the quest of the drive-source and the essence of the drive-object seized by this same quest. Following from theses 3 and 4 above, the full satisfaction of the drives is inherently impossible. The repeated demands of the axis of iteration for an unmodified recovery of the past objects of the drives is necessarily routed through the volatile, ephemeral sphere of the axis of alteration's representational elements. The object perpetually obtained through this mediating detour, at the behest of the insistence upon the return of the same enjoyment, is, by virtue of its own structurally and phenomenally determined features, never the same thing, never the libidinal *Ding* (as Lacan calls it) forever sought after throughout the defiles of the subject's ontogenetic trajectory.

In his theory of culture—as found mainly in the later texts—Freud implicitly subscribes to a fantasmatic romanticization of the past. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* in particular, although he clearly argues that discontent is intrinsic to the human condition as a part of human nature, he also contends that the necessity of the sociocultural imposition of "instinctual renunciation" (as the primary cause of discontent) is something resulting from the history of humanity's development. In other words, despite the treatment of discontent as constitutional, Freud nonetheless tacitly maintains that, if it weren't for the external interference of contingent historical factors, the human individual would be capable of peacefully coexisting with his/her drives, of freely indulging in his/her primitive urges. Based on an erroneous pseudohistory of the emergence of group organizations in human life, Freud clings to a perhaps unconscious fantasy of a paradise lost—a libidinal "Garden of Eden" from which humanity was accidentally expelled by the discovery of civilization's rule of law as a means of organizing collective existence.

Arising from certain lines of reasoning central to Freud's post-1920 theory of culture, Freudo-Marxism deploys an interpretation of the sociopsychical subject—an interpretation clinging to a belief in the possibility of an unfettered enjoyment of the drives similar to that of the later Freud. For authors such as Herbert Marcuse, "libidinal liberation" will be achieved once the artificially sustained repressive mechanisms of capitalism are abolished. In Freud, the fantasy of an unimpeded, (re)naturalized libidinal economy is projected back into a distant historical past, a mythical period preceding the emergence of socially imposed instinctual renunciation. In some versions of Freudo-Marxism, the only difference from Freud is that this fantasy of a final, exhaustive satisfaction of the drives is projected into an ever-receding future (as the titillating prospect of a "revolution" that teasingly hovers on the horizon).

Freud's nostalgic romanticization of a lost past and Freudo-Marxism's messianic anticipation of libidinal liberation are simply two examples, cast in the mold of abstract theoretical endeavors, of the general means by which the unconscious copes with the inherent dysfunctionality of *Trieb:* A metapsychologically determined failure internal to the dynamics of the libidinal economy—the ahistorical invariance of dissatisfaction arising from the conflictual division of each and every drive resulting in, as it were, a "discontent prior to civilization"—is defensively projected as a series of contingent external obstacles. The Freudian concept of reality—in its differing guises as the paternal figure, society's restrictive rules, and so on—becomes the scapegoat for the irresolvable impasse of drive. Although total satisfaction and/or the final alleviation of suffering are impossible for a variety of reasons, the unconscious latches onto the historically variant impediments of its *Umwelt* as alibis—as means of sustaining fantasies of a *jouissance* that must, of necessity, always remain *à venir.*

### 6. *The unconscious functions, in part, to fantasmatically conceal from the subject the internal deadlocks of the libidinal economy.*

The unconscious—which itself must not be equated with the id-body of the drives—is compelled to protect the subject from a crushing confrontation with the self-defeating nature of the libidinal economy. It accomplishes this task through two coordinated strategies. Its first move is to fabricate fantasies of full *jouissance,* fantasies that tend to express the same basic notion: If it weren't for obstacles x, y, or z, the subject would be able to unproblematically enjoy life. This basic notion is elaborated and embellished via a changing multitude of scenarios and permutations—

such as, "I used to be able enjoy myself, until traumatic event x occurred"; or, "Once I overcome difficulties y and z then I'll be happy at last"; or, "Everyone else is able to take pleasure in a blissfully simple existence unperturbed by anxiety, guilt, and frustration"—the essential idea being the belief that *jouissance* exists. Then, in order to sustain these fantasies—in order to prevent them from being falsified by the no doubt traumatic actualization of the fantasized "liberating" conditions—the unconscious comes to rely upon the constant presence of these various external obstacles to the drives. To put it in traditional Freudian parlance, the primary repression founding subjectivity is the gesture of fleeing from the impossible demands of *Trieb*'s axis of iteration. The subject then accepts the subsequent forms of secondary repression—ranging from the Oedipal paternal figure's intervention to the laws of civilization—as ready-made pathways for this flight. The ingenuity of this strategy of secondary repression is that it allows an illusory escape from the internal dictatorship of the drives while nonetheless conveniently preserving a psychical conviction regarding the possibility of quelling the drives through a hypothetically obtainable form of satisfaction/enjoyment.

However, this isn't to argue that historical forms of repression and suppression are simply generated by the subject's own unconscious. No ridiculous claim is made here to the effect that individuals are subjugated by external circumstances merely because they desire to be so or that one couldn't assess differing degrees of socially determined suffering. But what indeed merits emphasizing is (to once again borrow a Hegelian turn of phrase) the cunning of libidinal reason—the multifarious ways in which the formations of the unconscious transform externally imposed necessities into internalized psychical virtues. Human beings quickly learn the benefits of hugging their chains and singing in their cages. In other words, the libidinal economy comes to acquire a stake in its own inhibition. The pleasure principle not only manages to cleverly accommodate itself to the reality principle—as per the orthodox model of sublimation; to a large extent, the pleasure principle becomes completely dependent upon the reality principle qua obstacle to the drives. Risking a metaphorical formulation couched in the simplest of terms: For the unconscious, the grass is necessarily greener on the other side; the fence itself is the readily available material device for sustaining this belief. The actual removal of the fence—the complete elimination of reality's barriers to the libidinal economy, or, as Lacan would put it, the transubstantiation of "*jouissance* expected" into "*jouissance* obtained"—would be one of the worst traumas possible for the psychical subject.

*7. The Freudian prohibitory super-ego ultimately serves to protect the defensive fantasies of the unconscious, and, therefore, also to shield the subject from the onslaught of the drive-sources as a corporeal super-ego.*

In standard versions of Freudian theory, the super-ego is the psychical voice of conscience. This inner prohibitory function is created through the individual's internalization of initially external authority figures (typically, the parents of the Oedipal situation). The super-ego says "No!" to the impulses and inclinations of the drives.

Freud is careful to highlight two important features of the super-ego: First, the super-ego, unlike the external authority figures upon which it's modeled, is something from which the subject cannot escape. Although the individual can potentially avoid the punishments of others by either not getting caught or by physically running away, the internal persecutory tribunal of the super-ego knows all, sees all, and is invariably successful at executing its guilty verdicts. The gaze of conscience cannot be evaded. Second, the super-ego's "energy" is on loan from the id—that is to say, the super-ego channels id-level aggression. This psychical agency is the ultimate subliminatory compromise between the drives and civilization: The super-ego brings the individual's intentionality and conduct into conformity with the requirements of collective human existence, while simultaneously offering a path of somewhat relieving discharge for aggressive, socially destabilizing tendencies.

This project, as summarized in the preceding six theses, has several implications for this Freudian concept. To begin with, Freud is at pains to answer the question as to how or why individuals perform an internalization of external authority, an acceptance and self-maintenance of apparently undesirable restrictions upon their libidinal economies. The traditional metapsychological version of the pleasure-versus-reality dichotomy is insufficient; all it would be able to state is that subjects become cognizant of the ineliminable presence of a restrictive *Umwelt,* while still continuing to pursue "pleasure" by expedient alternative means (the detours of sublimation, in which reality is simply something that diverts, but doesn't disrupt, the rule of the pleasure principle). This utterly fails to explain why an initially id-governed being—the "polymorphously perverse" child of psychoanalysis—not only takes stock of external reality, but spontaneously introjects/internalizes these restrictions in the form of a special psychical agency. If individuals are born into the world as mere bundles of drives, as purely pleasure-seeking organisms, then how is it that the germinal seeds of the super-ego ever take root? Wouldn't the psyche reject this foreign entity like the body rejects an unsuccessful organ transplant?

The theory of the split drive provides an answer to these troubling questions, an answer consisting of three claims: First, Freud is incorrect when he describes the super-ego as the first internal authority from which the subject cannot flee. If anything, the originally inescapable tyrants of psychical life are the drive-sources, issuing their ceaseless injunctions for the uncompromising pursuit of gratification—one could call the aggregate of these injunctions the "corporeal super-ego." Second, the demands of the drive-sources are impossible to fulfill. Hence, as explained in theses 5 and 6 above, the impediments of reality are pressed into the service of propping up a failing, imploding libidinal economy—this second claim already hints at a solution to Freud's problems with explaining why the drives eventually capitulate to reality. Third, in order to have the assurance of a protective barrier to the drives that is more reliable than the variable empirical conditions presented by the unpredictable *Umwelt,* a prohibitory agency (namely, the Freudian super-ego) is established in the psyche's *Innenwelt* as a guarantee against the trauma of living out the drives—a trauma resulting from the discovery that the enjoyment expected on the hither side of the obstacles surrounding it is immediately transformed into something disappointing, or even disgusting, once obtained.

In other words, the subject's intrinsic inability to answer "the call of libidinal duty"—*à la* the insistence of the drives upon enjoyment—is veiled by a super-ego that deters the subject from ever trying in the first place. Evidence for this includes the Freudian "economic paradox" of masochism: When the context of the subject's lived environment becomes more permissive with respect to his/her repressed inclinations, the super-ego becomes, strangely enough, even harsher in its categorical commands and affective punishments. Since the super-ego is ultimately an insurance policy of sorts against the secretly unwanted opportunities for actualizing the drives and their unconscious fantasmatic correlates, the masochistic economy at work between the external restrictions of reality and the internal prohibitions of the super-ego is essentially a zero-sum system. Simply put, the more permissive reality becomes, the more prohibitive the super-ego becomes; conversely, the more prohibitive reality becomes, the less restrictive the super-ego becomes—one always takes up the slack for the other.

The original, archaic command of the Lacanian super-ego—as the corporeal super-ego, as a "corpo-Real"—to "Enjoy!" becomes the imperative of the Freudian super-ego to "Renounce!" And yet, this too is a cunning ruse on the part of *Trieb.* If the archaic objects of the drives cannot be, as Freud puts it, re-found, then the superfluous prohibition of these impossible objects (a prohibition sustained by both the reality principle

and the super-ego) functions to conceal this impossibility behind the façade of seemingly eliminable barriers (these barriers manifest themselves as imposed rules, laws, and adverse circumstantial conditions as well as personal "hang-ups"). As Lacan might have expressed it, human subjects are faced with a forced choice between "bad or worse": Either an acceptance of the low-level discontent of instinctual renunciation, or, worse, a loss of the comfortable everyday distance from the drives leading to dehumanization and enslavement, resulting in a reduction to being mere puppets of nature psychotically wrestling with the ravenous forces of these irrational and capricious corporeal masters.

TIME DRIVEN

Part 1

# Metapsychology, Temporality, and Structure

1

# The Temporal Repressed in Freudian Psychoanalysis

## §1 Time and the Freudian Unconscious

A common portrayal of Freud in terms of his philosophical significance—and one which he himself encourages[1]—is as a psychological Copernicus. In postulating the existence of forces foreign to the territory of reflective consciousness—these forces, while lying outside the sphere of the ego, nonetheless dominate its activity—Freud inaugurates a mental decentering of the human subject analogous to Copernicus' heliocentric displacement of Ptolemaic astronomy. As often noted, after Freud's dethroning of the self-transparent, rational subject, "man is no longer master in his own house." The constitutive blind spots inherent to consciousness become the new sources of significance for human thought.[2]

Is Freud's century-old "revolution," so called through the comparison with Copernicus, still revolutionary in the present? Once a radical rupture in the history of ideas has been distilled into a condensed set of formulas—*"Wo Es war, soll Ich werden,"* "the ego is an object," "the finding of an object is a re-finding of it," and so on—can it remain as unsettling as during its initial genesis? All revolutions naturally appear novel when contrasted with the status quo against which they react. However, at the same time, all revolutions also contain the seeds of their own destruction. If successful in overthrowing the previous theoretical regime, a revolutionary theory immediately runs the risk of becoming as complacent as its predecessor. Although this observation is itself practically a truism, the revolutionaries frequently become the new tyrants.

How can this stagnation be avoided in psychoanalytic theory? What is needed to prevent the comfortable reabsorption of the "ex-centricity" of the unconscious? In 1953, less than fifteen years after Freud's death, Jacques Lacan perceived the necessity of revivifying the scandalous nature

of the unconscious—an unconscious in danger of being hastily defanged, rendered tame, manageable, and impotent in the face of the socially adaptive ego.[3] In large part, Lacan's "return to Freud" consists in asking: "Why is the Freudian unconscious revolutionary?" In the shadow of Lacan, the question merits being posed once again.

The psychoanalytic decentering of the subject is brought about in a very specific manner: The field of present consciousness is always–already overdetermined by an unconscious past. In effect, Freud participates in what Derrida later identifies as an assault upon the "metaphysics of presence."[4] The immediacy of self-consciousness is unwittingly shaped by the background noise of an "other scene," a scene whose very alterity is intimately connected with its being out of joint with the present theater of what could provisionally be called a "now consciousness"—namely, the awareness of ongoing cognition. For the psychoanalytic hermeneutics of suspicion, the present (that is, the temporal space most familiar to the ego), instead of being an experience whose meaning is readily legible via conscious reflection, is invariably stained by indelible-yet-veiled traces of the past. The "return of the repressed" designates precisely this intrusion of the past within the confines of the present. Thus, an essential facet of Freud's discovery of the unconscious is a decisive reconception of the subject's relation to time. Ironically, although Freud's work undeniably carries this consequence for the human experience of time—what phenomenologists baptize as "temporality"—Freud seemingly dismisses the issue of time as irrelevant concerning the unconscious qua proper object of psychoanalysis. However, as Derrida insightfully cautions, "The timelessness of the unconscious is no doubt determined only in opposition to a common concept of time . . . the unconscious is no doubt timeless only from the standpoint of a certain vulgar conception of time" (Derrida 1978b, 215).

In formulating his metapsychological principles, Freud expels time from the unconscious—"The processes of the system *Ucs.* are *timeless;* i.e., they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all" (*SE* 14: 187). This declaration licenses a subsequent neglect of temporal questions in analytic theory:

> Psychoanalysts have always been unconcerned with problems of temporality. For them, this philosophical category brings with it the limitations of formalism and abstraction. Let us talk about time, fine. But whose time will it be and for what? The 'primary process' of dreams does not admit this concept while the 'secondary process' of the waking I has received it through social channels . . . Time is never dealt with explicitly as an issue or problem. (Abraham 1995, 111)

Although the timeless character of the unconscious is formulaically proclaimed as a general tenant of analysis in 1915, it results from a long line of observations and ideas found throughout Freud's oeuvre: The indestructibility of infantile wishes (1900);[5] the persistence of "polymorphously perverse" libidinal activities through sublimation (1905);[6] the mechanisms of transferential object-choice in neurosis (1915);[7] and the guiding presupposition that simple forgetting is impossible—repression is a necessary consequence of the "mystic writing pad" model of the unconscious.[8] Perhaps Freud is concerned that any temporalization of the unconscious would result in a loss of explanatory power with respect to such phenomena. And yet, in arguing for the hegemony of earlier experiences over later ones, isn't a certain chronological bias still operative regarding the "timeless" unconscious?

## §2 The Temporal Instances of the Freudian System

In Freud's own writings, the supposedly necessary disjunction between time and the unconscious is nonetheless dubious. For instance, in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud identifies two sources of material vital to the construction of every dream—infantile wishes and "day-residues." In order for an infantile wish to noticeably inscribe itself through the medium of a dream, it must attach itself to fragments of the dreamer's recent waking experiences. Correlative to the distinction between manifest and latent dream-texts, fresh mnemic traces behave like a Trojan horse for repressed childhood desires. Day-residues form the apparent, manifest materials of dreams; they are the present disguise necessary for the emergence of past wishes. The rebus-like manifest dream-text distorts these archaic desires just enough for them to elude the censorship of the half-slumbering ego. At the same time, this text leaves enough hints "between the lines" to allow for an analytic interpretation of the latent, libidinal significance stemming from the repressed past.[9]

However, to say that day-residues are nothing more than supplementary points of attachment for infantile wishes is to miss the admitted fact that such wishes are powerless, on their own, to enter the space of dreaming. Although Freud clearly gives the dominant role in dream-processes to early desires, these desires rely on a catalyst, a trigger-mechanism—the recent waking life of the individual. This is indeed a strange form of domination; the past overdetermines the present only insofar as the present inadvertently provides the past with certain oppor-

tune openings, namely, materials possessing associational connections to repressed contents. By itself, the unconscious past is incapable of direct expression owing to the psychical function of censorship charged with the responsibility for maintaining repression. In light of this, the famous comparison of the manifest dream-text to a picture puzzle (a rebus)[10] has a relevance extending beyond Freud's employment of this metaphor.

The day-residues are like an arrangement of various jigsaw puzzle pieces already assembled to form the peripheral, bordering edge of the yet-to-be-completed puzzle picture. The rest of the picture, whose empty middle (surrounded by the enveloping border of already-assembled pieces) remains to be filled in, consists of puzzle pieces that can be placed inside the outer frame of pieces exclusively on condition that they fit with the already-laid pieces. This vacant space framed by the outer pieces is like the unconscious field of repression, being an invisibility that is apprehended only through the negative outline/relief of it sketched by the thin edge of consciousness. In other words, the day-residues, as the initially available puzzle pieces from which both the dream and its interpretation depart (as manifest fragments from the individual's present), predetermine both the order of emergence as well as the overall arrangement of the puzzle as a whole (the conjunction of manifest and latent dream-texts, the wish and its articulation, the past and the present). The chronological hierarchy generally suggested by Freudian dream interpretation can be sustained only by a grotesque abstraction from the subtleties of dream-processes.

One year prior to the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams,* in a short paper containing a disguised fragment of his self-analysis, Freud discusses a phenomenon that brings to the fore the interaction already highlighted between past wishes and present day-residues—screen memories. Through the careful examination of an alleged childhood memory of his own (a scene centered around himself and a friend snatching flowers from a little girl), Freud realizes that, despite his conscious sense of certainty that the visual traces composing the recalled scene reflect an actual experience from earlier life, this might be a fabricated or partially fabricated memory. The present impulses as well as the unconscious fantasies of the adult Freud conspire to express a disavowed desire via the channel of a mnemic construct whose apparent facticity allows it to circumvent repression.

Why are screen memories significant in this discussion of time and the unconscious? What differentiates them from the day-residues of the dream-work? In the conclusion of his essay on this special class of memories, Freud states:

> It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating to* our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, *emerge;* they were *formed* at that time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves. (*SE* 3: 322)

The "periods of arousal" mentioned by Freud are analogous to the day-residues of the dream-work. Certain circumstances, events, and/or motives operative in the recent experience of the individual activate earlier wishes and their corresponding repressed representatives. However, through the deliberate contrasts established by Freud between "*from*"–"*relating to*" and "*emerge*"–"*formed,*" a significant difference in the treatment of cathected representations between screen memories and the dream-work is clear: Dreams are interpreted as reflecting the dominance of infantile experience over adult life, while screen memories express a dialecticization of the psychical relationship between past and present—that is to say, the past is only ever recovered in an indirect, distorted fashion within the sublating framework of the present. Put differently, the trajectory of influence in screen memories is bi-directional. As in dreams, the repressed past resurfaces in the manifest text of consciously accessible material—that is, the past shapes the present. But, simultaneously, the contextual parameters of the subject's present retroactively alter the very past which supposedly influences this same present (the basic structure of this second, distinctive dynamic in screen memories is also visible in the phenomenon of "deferred action").[11] This explains why, for example, Freud replaces the unidirectionality of the "*from*" of memory—memories originate solely within an earlier chronological period—with the notion of memory as a "*relating*" between past and present. The actual content of memory is plastic and malleable when placed in the hands of a mental apparatus obeying its conflictual masters—the pleasure and reality principles. As a result, a metapsychological theory of memory is left with the unfulfilled task of delineating the structure of the (temporal) processes whereby such contents are shaped.

The immediate objection to this conclusion drawn from screen memories is that Freud is describing conscious recollection. Although preconscious and conscious memories are sometimes retroactive distortions of an ego-centered "backwards glance"—an *après-coup* by which the

ego blindly and unwittingly rewrites its past—the relevant repressed nuclei remain unchanged. Screen memories are fabricated precisely in order to aid in stifling unconscious contents. But even if Freud himself is reluctant to extend the psychical scope of the temporal dynamic of screen memories beyond the status of being a conscious handmaiden for defense mechanisms, nothing should prevent a theoretical development in this direction. In fact, two significant motifs within Freud's own thought, despite the unresolved tension between them, suggest such an extension: On the one hand, the permanent influence of earlier experience upon the present; and, on the other hand, the constant capacity for re-transcribing the significance of the past vis-à-vis the *après-coup* of deferred action. How can one rectify this underlying discrepancy? Moreover, this unresolved tension internal to Freud's understanding of the temporality of the psychical subject is the key to unlocking numerous enigmas plaguing psychoanalysis at both the therapeutic and theoretical levels.[12]

Perhaps what is timeless about memory is not anything like its determinate content, but merely the motility of the processes through which content is altered in decisive fashions. Screen memories and deferred action indicate that the very value/significance of unconscious materials is caught in the deferrals of meaning introduced by the always-possible retroactive revision stimulated by the accumulation of ever more materials over the time of the subject's lived history. Of course, originally, the indefinite series of retroactively effectuated displacements operating between past and present departs from certain chronological coordinates in the early stages of the individual's life. However, these origins are best considered as always–already lost, since, once they are caught in the defiles of psychical temporality, the suspension of their definitive meaning renders uncompromised access to them impossible. Furthermore, the discoveries of both deferred action—first glimpsed in the 1894 *Studies on Hysteria* coauthored with Josef Breuer[13]—and screen memories closely precede the 1900 publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams.* This alone makes any attempt to separate the psychology of the dream-processes from the retroactivity of memory suspect. Additionally, the inspection of the function of day-residues reveals the same mutual dependency of (unconscious) past and (conscious) present. The theme of the unrivaled hegemony of the past in psychoanalysis is the result of a hasty abstraction from the crucial details of psychoanalytic evidence, an abstraction to which Freud too occasionally succumbs.

## §3 Psychological Content, Metapsychological Form, and the Temporal Status of the Unconscious

Returning to one of the instigators of this discussion—Freud's 1915 proclamation of the "timelessness" of the unconscious—provisional distinctions are needed in order to understand the still inadequately delineated conflict between the apparent temporal qualities of psychical processes and Freud's insistence on the atemporality of the unconscious. One must keep in mind that Freud posits a fundamental ignorance of time in characterizing the unconscious—along with its ignorance of negation as well as death[14]—within the context of his metapsychological papers. What is distinctive about these texts in relation to his other writings? In both his case studies and technical papers, Freud proceeds by focusing on the empirical evidence available through psychoanalysis as a therapeutic practice. By contrast, Freud conceives of metapsychology as psychoanalysis's answer to metaphysics.[15] In other words, Freudian metapsychology, unlike its clinical applications, describes the system of structural functions known through the discovery of the unconscious. Additionally, although Freud arrives at these laws through empirical research—a method strikingly dissimilar to the procedures of most metaphysicians—they are presented as having something close to a transcendental status. The metapsychological portrait of the unconscious sketches the necessary conditions for the possibility of psychical experience as postulated by analytic interpretation and its underlying model of the mind.[16]

However, the metapsychology of the unconscious only claims to offer a minimal, skeletal outline of this psychical system. No details are provided as to how this system is invariably fleshed out in its individual manifestations for different subjects. That is to say, nobody's unconscious is simply an empty set of metapsychological rules. Although calling psychoanalysis a "psychology" is problematic for several reasons,[17] the distinction between psychology and metapsychology is useful: The psychological field of psychoanalysis is defined by the variable particularities of the empirical data divulged through analytic practice, whereas the metapsychological domain contains the aggregate of a priori principles that must be in place at the outset for the initiation of analytic interpretation as such. The very gathering of psychological data in psychoanalysis is, in certain decisive ways, made possible by its metapsychological framework.

Casting the ostensibly timeless unconscious as a "regulative concept" for psychoanalysis and its praxis is a further productive means for understanding the theoretical import and status of this basic Freudian notion. Instead of being an ontologized object existing "in itself," the

unconscious functions more in the role of a necessary, indispensable assumption for an analysis centered on defense mechanisms and their vicissitudes. Speaking of the metapsychology of the unconscious, Freud is quite honest about the justifications for the belief in an unconscious:

> Our right to assume the existence of something mental that is unconscious and to employ that assumption for the purposes of scientific work is disputed in many quarters. To this we can reply that our assumption of the unconscious is *necessary* and *legitimate,* and that we possess numerous proofs of its existence.
>
> It is *necessary* because the data of consciousness have a very large number of gaps in them; both in healthy and in sick people psychical acts often occur which can be explained only by presupposing other acts, of which, nevertheless, consciousness affords no evidence. These not only include parapraxes and dreams in healthy people, and everything described as a psychical symptom or an obsession in the sick; our most personal daily experience acquaints us with ideas that come into our head we do not know how. All these conscious acts remain disconnected and unintelligible if we insist upon claiming that every mental act that occurs in us must also necessarily be experienced by us through consciousness; on the other hand, they fall into a demonstrable connection if we interpolate between them the unconscious acts which we have inferred. (*SE* 14: 166–167)

This rationalization of the supposition of the unconscious displays certain Kantian undertones. Most notably, the "necessity" of the concept of the unconscious in terms of providing a unification of otherwise inexplicable phenomena resonates with Kant's claims about the role of reason and its legitimate employment beyond the "limits of possible experience."[18] Immediately following these remarks, Freud says:

> A gain in meaning is a perfectly justifiable ground for going beyond the limits of direct experience. When, in addition, it turns out that the assumption of there being an unconscious enables us to construct a successful procedure by which we can exert an effective influence upon the course of conscious processes, this success will have given us an incontrovertible proof of the existence of what we have assumed. This being so, we must adopt the position that to require that whatever goes on in the mind must also be known to consciousness is to make an untenable claim. (*SE* 14: 167)

This quotation strengthens the ties to Kant, especially with the phrase "the limits of direct experience." For Freud, the unconscious is, by definition, unavailable to the perception-consciousness's "faculty of intuition." But, the "gain in meaning"—that is, the unification of the "manifold of (analytic) empirical cognition" and the ensuing knowledge of it—afforded by psychoanalytic reason justifies "going beyond" the limits imposed by consciousness. Psychoanalysis reveals itself as, at least in part, a rationalist project, inasmuch as it participates in reason's incessant movement toward greater systematic unities—a movement that refuses to remain wedded strictly to the experimental–inductive procedures of the more empiricist natural sciences.

Invoking Kant here (which Freud doesn't explicitly do) is fortuitous. Although Freud rationalizes the theoretical legitimacy of the unconscious by appealing to the systematic unity provided by such a metapsychological "maxim," he nonetheless indulges himself in the kind of fallacy that Kant attacks in the "Transcendental Dialectic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Freud equivocates between a regulative conception of the unconscious (the unconscious as an idea justified through the epistemological unity it provides)[19] and a constitutive use of it—the unconscious as an actually existent entity apart from its role as a unifying idea of psychoanalytic reason. In other words, he sometimes "hypostatizes" the unconscious.[20] The previous quotations provide ample evidence of this illegitimate slippage: "[W]e possess numerous proofs of its *existence,*" "the assumption of there *being* an unconscious," "an incontrovertible proof of the *existence* of what we have assumed," etc. Through a "critique of psychoanalytic reason," the timeless unconscious must be resituated as a guiding principle for the unifying activity of analytic interpretation, not as an indestructible "thing-in-itself" subsisting beneath consciousness. Even if not directly addressed to Freud, Lacan's warnings that the unconscious is "preontological,"[21] or has a (non)existence as the "unrealized,"[22] should be taken as rebuking this tendency in Freud to jump from technico-discursive principles to quasi-metaphysical, substantialist claims. If an unconscious *Cogito* appears in analysis, there nonetheless should be no immediate transition to an unproblematic *ergo sum*.

Before continuing along the interrogative thread leading to a temporal investigation of the psychical apparatus, one consequence of the unconscious being a regulative concept of psychoanalysis deserves mention. In the eighth appendix to Edmund Husserl's *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology,* Eugen Fink offers a succinct phenomenological critique of the psychoanalytic unconscious. For Fink, the foundation for any analytic project lies in the necessarily prior grounds of

a phenomenological elucidation of consciousness. In asserting the primacy of consciousness, he goes on the offensive against the implicit Freudian rejection of phenomenology as guided by a misdirected focus on consciousness:

> This objection, which is raised in many variations against the so-called 'consciousness-idealism of phenomenology,' is based on a fundamental philosophical *naïveté*. This is not the place to criticize the 'mythical' theories set up on the basis of an obscure empirical procedure about the true essence of life (announcing itself in the phenomena of the 'unconscious'), be it the naturalistic mechanism of the 'libido' or some other 'dynamics' of drives and instincts. The *naïveté* we refer to consists, before all theory-construction about the unconscious, in an *omission*. One thinks one is already acquainted with what the 'conscious,' or consciousness, is and dismisses the task of first making into a prior subject matter the concept against which any science of the unconscious must demarcate its subject matter, i.e., precisely that of consciousness. But because one does not know what consciousness is, one misses in principle the point of departure of a science of the 'unconscious.' (Fink 1970, 386)

Skipping for now Fink's understandable mischaracterization of the psychoanalytic unconscious as simply being the negation or inverse of consciousness—in bemoaning Freud's unfortunate choice of a negative prefix, Lacan alludes to this deceptiveness of the word "un-conscious"[23]—a Freudian reply based on the unconscious as a quasi-Kantian rational–regulative conception quickly resolves the conflict between phenomenology and (structuralist) psychoanalysis. If the unconscious is an idea imposed by the need to provide a systematic unity to an otherwise inexplicable and disparate mass of conscious data, then the assertion that a phenomenological understanding of consciousness must precede the "science of the unconscious" puts the cart before the horse. In fact, the reverse is true: Only by theoretically presupposing the unconscious can consciousness become a consistent, fully illuminated object of investigation. Fink's critique fails to perceive the possibility that psychoanalysis may very well be committed to the pursuit of the same ultimate truth as phenomenological philosophy. The unconscious, instead of being an ineffable psychological depth or a hidden container located back behind consciousness, is immanent within the very surface of consciousness, in its gaps or lacunas:

> The unconscious *is* a concept founded on the trail [*trace*] left by that which operates to constitute the subject.
> The unconscious *is not* a species defining the circle of that part of psychi-

> cal reality which does not have the attribute (or the virtue) of consciousness. (Lacan 1995a, 260)

Lacan continues:

> Everything . . . points to the distribution of consciousness in psychical reality—however the latter's texture is ordered—consciousness being heterotopic in terms of levels and erratic at each level. (Lacan 1995a, 261)

Once Freud's hypostatization of the unconscious is corrected and this psychical function is henceforth viewed as inhering within the "heterotopic" texture of consciousness itself, the phenomenological rebuttal of psychoanalysis' foundations is no longer viable. Furthermore, how can Fink's version of Husserlian phenomenology explain away those phenomena of consciousness that don't even make sense to the individual experiencing them—for example, phobias, fate neuroses, and obsessive ideas—all those symptoms whose very conscious inexplicability or nonsensicality is precisely what drives people into analysis? Also, don't defense mechanisms guarantee the ultimate failure of any attempted phenomenological reduction to/of consciousness?

In light of this clarified theoretical background against which the timeless unconscious is set, a provisional distinction aids in making progress toward a refined understanding of the relationship between time, temporality, and the unconscious. While the atemporal unconscious is an empty, metapsychologically defined topographical system—a presupposition for psychoanalysis insofar as its interpretation is guided by an understanding of the inevitability of repression—the actualized unconscious of any and every living subject is necessarily "full," that is, it includes determinate contents as well as the metapsychological rules pertaining to the psychical apparatus. If the previous reading of deferred action, screen memories, and day-residues has any legitimacy, such a differentiation between levels of description, *à la* the mere possibility conditions of the psyche versus the manifest version of the always–already "fleshed out" unconscious, is fully justified. Yet, after the 1920 shift to the second topography, Freud, in the 1933 *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,* reiterates his assertions pertaining to a timeless portion of the psyche:

> There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time; there is no recognition of the passage of time, and—a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought—no alteration in its mental processes is produced by the passage of time. Wishful impulses which have never passed beyond the id, but impressions, too,

> which have been sunk into the id by repression, are virtually immortal; after the passage of decades they behave as though they had just occurred. They can only be recognized as belonging to the past, can only lose their importance and be deprived of their cathexis of energy, when they have been made conscious by the work of analysis, and it is on this that the therapeutic effect of analytic treatment rests to no small extent. (*SE* 22: 74)

The first thing that a reader familiar with Freud notices is the substitution of "id" for "unconscious." The id is now the atemporal portion of the mental apparatus. An engagement with the pressing question of the difference between "unconscious" and "id" must be temporarily postponed. However, Jean Laplanche's suggestion that the unconscious is created only after the fact of primary repression is helpful in this regard.[24] This indicates that the id, as the reservoir of libidinal energies, is ignorant of time; but, the unconscious, as that which consists of repressed representatives (and not economic forces per se, as with the id), is indeed temporalized. Returning to Freud's 1933 remarks, the passage above seemingly refutes the efforts already made to distinguish between a temporal, concrete unconscious and an atemporal, metapsychological unconscious. But, certain doubts about the obviousness of this reasserted timelessness immediately arise. Are the "mental processes" that undergo "no alteration" the same as the materials through which they are mediated—that is, psychical *Vorstellungen,* word- and/or thing-presentations? Is the "passage of time" that the id refuses to recognize strictly equivalent to a chronological conception of time—namely, the notion of time supposedly derived from the perception-consciousness system?[25] Or, rather, is the id ignorant of linear time while being immersed in temporal(izing) "mental processes"? Furthermore, when "deprived of their cathexis of energy," do the repressed materials become different-in-kind from what they were in their previous cathected state? These suggestive inquiries receive clarification through Lacan's introduction of the notion of the "signifier" as essential for the conceptualization of the unconscious (see §§21–23 and §30).

Immediately following the paragraph just quoted, Freud utters an aside that expresses a certain degree of ambivalence regarding the issue of a psychoanalytic understanding of time. Freud emphasizes the centrality of his position on time for an adequate version of the theory of repression. And yet, he cites a lack of headway on the topic:

> Again and again I have had the impression that we have made too little theoretical use of this fact, established beyond any doubt, of the unalterability by time of the repressed. This seems to offer an approach to the

> most profound discoveries. Nor, unfortunately, have I myself made any progress here. (*SE* 22: 74)

What "progress" does Freud feel disappointed at not having achieved, since the timelessness of the unconscious seems more like an initial assumption inaugurating analytic practice than a mysterious problem to be solved through theoretical investigation? Also, as opposed to making "too little theoretical use of this fact," doesn't Freud always–already make use of the timeless unconscious/id in his interpretive method? Isn't the impossibility of forgetting that justifies the analyst's assumption of repressive mechanisms inseparable from the idea of the unconscious as an indelible recording surface paying no heed whatsoever to chronological order? This statement quoted above is a clue to the presence of important riddles perturbing the later Freud as inexplicable by-products of his own evolving oeuvre.

## §4 Driven Time

Another unresolved problem in the later Freud hinges on his 1920 introduction of the "death drive" (*Todestrieb*). In his metapsychological papers, Freud stringently denies death any place in the unconscious, and links this rejection to the absence of both time and negation in the unconscious. The earlier Freud even appears to directly indict the very possibility of his subsequently developed theory of the *Todestrieb*—"there is nothing instinctual in us which responds to a belief in death" (*SE* 14: 296). Death, as the "ravages of negativity" (to put it in Hegelian parlance), bears an intimate kinship with time and human temporality qua finitude. Thus, through a revision of his drive theory, Freud quietly alters his axiomatic "timeless unconscious." Without going into the details of the death drive in the present context, one should note that Freud extrapolates from this drive to a discussion of drives in general:

> Let us suppose, then, that all the organic instincts are conservative, are acquired historically and tend towards the restoration of an earlier state of things . . . It would be in contradiction to the conservative nature of the instincts if the goal of life were a state of things which had never yet been attained. (*SE* 18: 37–38)

James Strachey erroneously translates *Trieb* as "instinct" and not "drive" (every time a quotation from Freud's writings contains "instinct," one

should read "drive" unless otherwise indicated). Later, in 1933, Freud leaves the "conservative nature" essential to all drives hanging as a suspended question:

> The question, too, of whether the conservative character may not belong to all instincts without exception, whether the erotic instincts as well may not be seeking to bring back an earlier state of things when they strive to bring about a synthesis of living things into greater unities—this question, too, we must leave unanswered (*SE* 22: 107–108).

Juxtaposing two of Freud's remarks from his 1933 lectures, one arrives at an interesting situation in his post-1920 work: First, the progress in psychoanalytic thinking on time hasn't gone very far; and, second, the issue of the universally conservative orientation of drives is a speculative matter. Is there an intimate-yet-obscure connection between these two conceptual revenants haunting the Freudian system?

Without doubt, the conservative character of drive structure—Freud wavers on whether to have the death drive be a separate class of drive(s) unto itself, or whether to portray it as revelatory of the nature of all drives—designates something other than a strictly timeless order. If the drive, as a primarily unconscious entity, is capable of unduly favoring earlier drive representatives over later ones, then Freud implies some minimal degree of awareness of linear time within the operations of the libidinal economy—operations forming a significant portion of the unconscious. More recent representatives are somehow recognized as different from the older ones to which the drive seeks to return. Do unconscious drive representatives thus bear certain "time stamps" or "date markings" as an inherent part of their constitution? If so, then proclaiming the unconscious to be timeless is a gross oversimplification.

The regressive conservatism of drive reflects a consistent bias on Freud's part that favors the earliest phases of experience in the formation of the psyche. This bias runs from the indestructibility of infantile wishes (1900) to the unswerving course of the death drive (1920–1939). Although at least two distinct temporal models exist side by side in Freud's work, the one epitomized in the phenomenon of deferred action is always downplayed: "In the choice between a determinist conception that proceeds from the past to the future and a retrospective or hermeneutic conception that proceeds from the present to the past, Freud always chooses the former" (Laplanche 1999g, 261–262). Yet, despite Freud's neglect of temporal questions, a neglect stemming from his own observations and theorizations, the concept of *Trieb* is a point of collision for these two temporal models.

In their 1960 paper on the unconscious, Laplanche and Leclaire provide an elegant formula for understanding the relationship between an energetic *Trieb* and a representational unconscious. Borrowing some vocabulary from Lacan, they state, "the birth of the unconscious . . . *stems from the capture of instinctual energy in the web of the signifier*" (Laplanche and Leclaire 1972, 167). This formula differentiates between two levels—"instinctual energy" and "the web of the signifier." How does this difference relate to both *Trieb* and temporality? Leaping ahead to a set of connections yet to be made, "instinctual energy" refers to Freud's fundamentally conservative drive-source—that is, the "daemonic" aspect of drive, itself ignorant of the passage of time. The "web of the signifier" alludes to the always–already temporalized drive representatives qua ideational/mnemic traces—these representatives are what gets modified in hysterical traumas, screen memories, and the dream-text. The implicit distinction operative in Laplanche and Leclaire's statement provides a crucial hint as to a possible reevaluation of the respective places of Freud's two unreconciled attitudes toward time/temporality in analysis—the timelessness of the unconscious is based on a vulgar understanding of time as a linear series of now-points, while the *après-coup* of psychical retroaction offers a more nuanced theory of temporality. It can tentatively be said that the drives involve both a representational level and a nonrepresentational level, the former exhibiting and involving various temporal effects. According to Alexandre Kojève, "if life is a temporal phenomenon, biological Time surely has a structure different from that of historical or human Time; the whole question is to know how these two Times coexist" (Kojève 1969, 133). Kojève's "biological Time" might be compared with the seemingly eternal quality of the monotonously repetitive, nonrepresentational dimension of drives, while his "historical or human Time" could perhaps be associated with the dialectical dynamic traversing the unstable, ever-shifting representational dimension of drives. That is to say, the division between these two times—between "biological" repetition and "human" becoming—is located within the human realm itself. These two times antagonistically "coexist" within *Trieb* as an internally sustained conflict. For psychoanalysis, properly human temporality is characterized by the irreconcilable tension between time and eternity, between temporality and timelessness. This tension is the ultimate driving force of the psyche.

A consideration of the theoretical itinerary of *Trieb* in Freud's corpus reveals an unthematized duplicity in its most basic characterizations. On one level, drives are essentially conservative. They never tire of seeking to restore an "earlier state of affairs," paying utterly no heed to the ebb and flow of conscious time. Within any and every new context in the subject's

experience, drives find a means for repeating the determinative facets of the past in which they were decisively shaped.

But, on another level, drives are extremely malleable. Unlike the rigidity of animal instinct—an automatic, inherent form of behavior obligatory for every member of a given animal species, showing no variance in manifestation over the course of each species-member's life—drives are capable of an indefinite number of displacements. In the 1905 *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* Freud stresses the absence of any natural object-choice for a creature governed by *Trieb:*

> It has been brought to our notice that we have been in the habit of regarding the connection between the sexual instinct and the sexual object as more intimate than it in fact is. Experience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that in them the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together—a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the instinct. We are thus warned to loosen the bond that exists in our thoughts between instinct and object. It seems probable that the sexual instinct is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object's attractions. (*SE* 7: 147–148)

In the 1915 paper "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," this montage-like quality of the sexual drive and its object-choice becomes the generalized structure of *Trieb* as such. In his metapsychological definition of *Trieb,* Freud presents it as a four-tiered, compound entity. For something to be a drive per se according to psychoanalysis, it must consist of a source, pressure, aim, and object; all four components are necessarily co-present in every configuration identifiable as a drive. But, in the earlier passage quoted immediately above, the drive (dubbed the "sexual instinct") is considered separate from an external point of attachment (the "sexual object"). How is it that Freud arrives at the need "to loosen the bond that exists in our thoughts between instinct and object"?

To be brief, the related notions of aim-inhibition and sublimation—clearly present from the *Three Essays* up through the later works of the second topography on culture—are implicated in the development of *Trieb* as a concept entirely distinct from *Instinkt.* The "abnormal cases" of perversions—that is, sexualized object-choices not centered on the "natural" goal of heterosexual reproduction accomplished vis-à-vis genital copulation—demonstrate that human beings do not contain innate, unswerving instinctual programs invariably dictating the biologically "logical" choice of reproductive activity soldered to specific sexual objects and behaviors.

Whether through childhood experience (dominated by the sociocultural institution of the family), social prohibition (often in the form of the stigmatization of certain precocious manifestations of sexuality), or other factors, human beings are derailed from the mechanical regularity of instinct. This derailing occurs, at least for Freud, in a specific manner: The "instinctual energy" (frequently identified as "libido") underlying the drive remains constant, while the means by which this energy is discharged and the objects through which these discharge-aims are achieved (drive-objects and/or object-choices) are alterable under the influence of such vicissitudes as sublimation, itself necessitated by aim-inhibition in the face of external reality.

Furthermore, all drive-objects, instead of being "objects" in the simple sense of the material things of an *Umwelt* onto which the *Innenwelt* of an internal psychological energy is deposited via cathexes, are "drive representatives." Laplanche and Pontalis define this Freudian notion as, "the elements or the process by means of which the instinct finds psychical expression" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 223). That is to say, drive-objects belong to the same family as the elements composing traumatic event-memories in hysteria, screen memories, and the residual traces appearing in the manifest dream-text as day-residues. Further on, Laplanche and Pontalis note that, "Freud makes no distinction between the instinctual representative and the ideational one" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 223). Now, what is an "ideational representation"? Here is the reply: "Idea or group of ideas to which the instinct becomes fixated in the course of the subject's history; it is through the mediation of the ideational representative that the instinct leaves its mark in the psyche" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 203). Why is it that certain ideational representations—mnemic traces in the forms of two-event traumas, screen memories, and day-residues—serve to distort the unconscious and/or are distorted by unconscious forces? There is no other reason than because these particular "ideational traces"—ideational representations qua mnemic traces (as Laplanche and Pontalis themselves indicate, this is also the correct place to draw the connection to Lacan's "signifiers"[26])—are linked by association to wishes (in the case of dreams), libidinal energy (in the case of sexuality), and drives. The fundamental connection between Freud's two conflictual temporal models lies here.

In his 1915 essay "Repression," Freud states that repression affects only the representatives of drives. Through repression, a previous drive-representative (an aim and/or object) is denied admission to consciousness: "[*R*]*epression* . . . affects mental derivatives of the repressed representative. . . . Repression in fact interferes only with the relation of the instinctual representative to *one* psychical system, namely, to that of the

conscious" (*SE* 14: 148–149). Additionally, all the preceding examples of ideational traces, in which temporalization effects are visible, are distorted precisely in order to evade repression. In hysteria, the first event-memory is repressed in its traumatic guise after-the-fact of the second event-memory being inscribed in the psychical system. The second inscription, which remains accessible to conscious recollection, veils the pathogenic presence of the now-repressed first inscription. In screen memories, the apparent facticity of the retroactively projected, artificially fabricated memories enables the conscious staging of a scene in which a repressed desire is fulfilled. In the dream-work, the distortion afforded by day-residues permits earlier wishes—drive cathexes and their primal object-choices—to present themselves to the nocturnal perceptual field of the dreamer. Without such distortion, these wishes would remain buried under the regime of conscious/preconscious censorship. As a result, one dimension of drive indeed corresponds to Freud's emphasis on an ignorance of the passage of time; this side is the energy or source of the drive that gets continually displaced following the primal repression of the drive's most archaic object-choice. But, as seen in repression and the various means of evading it, another dimension of drive is caught in an indefinite series of displacements. These displacements are effectuated in a two-way process running simultaneously from past to present (the standard model of psychical determinism) and back again from present to past (the *après-coup* of deferred action). The question of whether or not these two dimensions of drive can or should be integrated with each other has yet to be answered.

Where does this path lead? What progress has been made in exploring the topics of time and the Freudian psyche? In identifying *Trieb* as the place of intersection for Freud's two temporal models, these models no longer need to be thought of as being mutually exclusive. In fact, this hypothesis of *Trieb* as split between two temporal organizations is one of the few ways to avoid favoring one portrayal of the drive at the expense of others—for example, stressing the conservative, "deathly" side of the drive to the detriment of the drive's potential for constant modification. The problem is that Freud himself, in part due to his neglect of the role of time in psychoanalysis, doesn't attempt any sort of reconciliation between his two unharmonized schemas.[27] One of the central tasks of this project is to develop a new drive theory in light of this unresolved Freudian problem.

2

# The Temporal Logic of Jacques Lacan

## §5 Therapy, Theory, and the Role of Time in Lacan

Near the end of 1963, the barely decade-old organization Société Française de Psychanalyse—founded after the 1953 departures of Jacques Lacan, Françoise Dolto, and others from the Société Psychanalytique de Paris—received the conditions for its admission and recognition as a training program in the International Psychoanalytic Association. One stipulation stands out with particular prominence: Jacques Lacan must be struck from the list of training analysts. After a prolonged investigation by a special committee assembled specifically for that purpose—this investigation involved interviews with many of Lacan's students and analysands—the IPA declared that the one non-negotiable requirement for the SFP's membership was its voluntary acceptance of a ban on Lacan's training activities.[1] In the opening session of his 1964 seminar, Lacan, comparing himself to Spinoza, calls this his "excommunication."[2] Why did this happen?

The central controversy surrounding Lacan at this time was his practice of variable-length sessions—often called "short sessions," although this is misleading since Lacan would either shorten or lengthen the time of the analytic session, depending on the patient.[3] On several occasions, Lacan told the members of the SFP that he would bring his practice into conformity with the IPA's rule requiring fifty-minute sessions. To put it bluntly, he lied.

Lacan justifies his variance of session length as a means of combating neurosis. Neurotics, especially obsessionals, take advantage of fixed-length sessions; they pre-script monologues so as to "kill time" and avoid

the work of free association. In this way, the rhythm of the sessions can be pressed into the service of resistances. By truncating the sessions at his discretion (Lacan speaks of this as "punctuating" the sessions[4]) Lacan not only thwarts the recitation of nonassociative "filler material," but creates a sense of urgency for the analysand.[5] They must associate in order to be cured, in order to offer the analyst genuine hints of the unconscious that the analyst is "supposed to know." Although his motives for engaging in this type of practice are tinged by suspicions—in shortening the length of sessions for trainees, Lacan was able to produce more practicing analysts than any other training analyst in his school, thus securing a greater amount of financial wealth and institutional influence[6]—Lacan nonetheless decisively demonstrates the importance of time in the psychoanalytic clinic, a demonstration that continues to cry out for careful consideration by clinicians. His approach to analysis, both as a theory and as a therapy, is deeply marked by his appreciation of the absolutely central role played by temporality in psychical life.

Just as an irony exists in the discrepancy between Freud's neglect of time as an explicit thematic and his system's striking consequences for rethinking the human rapport with time, so does an oddity reside in Lacan's handling of this same topic. Obviously, the Lacanian clinic is given its unique character in large part by the variability of session length. But, in his theoretical elaborations, Lacan consistently marginalizes the significance of time/temporality. As John Forrester notes, "even Lacanian analysts, far more imbued with the teachings and concepts of Lacan than I, admit that the theory of time was never sufficiently elaborated" (Forrester 1990, 169). The word "temporality" makes a fair number of appearances in Lacan's oeuvre, but this frequency is deceptive. Insofar as he is a Freudian, Lacan generally gives the upper hand to a synchronic structure of the unconscious over any diachronic unfolding of its constitutive elements.

Three cross sections of Lacan's thought, each dating from a distinct period of his theoretical evolution, reveal an underlying consistency in his alleged marginalization of time: "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism" (1946), the "*Tuché* and *Automaton*" material from the eleventh seminar (1964), and the twenty-sixth seminar on *Topology and Time* (1978–1979). Analyzing these pieces not only uncovers a certain conceptual unity beneath the shifting surfaces of Lacan's extended intellectual career—his subsequent reexaminations of the 1946 theory of "logical time" are themselves quite revelatory of fundamental metapsychological commitments—but also emphasizes the strange prominence of the very topic that is being marginalized (as is apparent, in two of the three texts considered here, the word "time" appears in the title). Overall, one could convincingly argue that time itself, for Lacan, is

to be situated in the register of the Real, as something foreclosed from the accessible texture of reality: Time-as-Real is never directly engaged with by the subject, but, nonetheless, it invisibly buffets and batters the images and signifiers shaping the contours of the subject's being. Like Freud, Lacan posits a fundamental ignorance regarding temporality at the level of the unconscious; however, he insists that this ignorance is not without its tangibly manifest effects and consequences. "Real time" is the forever vanishing motor of psychical dynamics.

## §6 The Three Times of the *Grand Autre*

Lacan's essay on logical time, published in the 1966 French edition of the *Écrits,* centers on a now familiar variation of the prisoners' dilemma. For one reason or another, a prison administration is faced with the necessity of freeing an inmate from its institution. Thus, perhaps out of the administration's sadistic boredom, the decision as to which prisoner will be released is to be determined by the outcome of a carefully devised game. Three prisoners are placed in a room, with a single colored disc affixed to each of their backs. The warden informs them that there are a total of five possible discs that could have been affixed to them—three white discs and two black discs. Three of these discs have been used, one for each prisoner. Of course, the room in which the three prisoners are deposited is designed so as to eliminate any potential for a prisoner being able to see the disc on his/her own back (there are no mirrors or reflective surfaces). Naturally, the prisoners also are prohibited from verbally communicating with each other.

The goal of the game consists in a prisoner successfully deducing the color of his/her own disc. A prisoner wins release when she/he is the first person to reach the door of the room and convincingly articulate for the warden how she/he reached a conclusion as to his/her own disc color. This explanation given by the prisoner must be logically sound; simply guessing or basing a decision on probability is insufficient to gain release. At the start of the game, the warden places a white disc on the back of each prisoner (neither of the black discs is used).[7]

What happens in this situation where, instead of the other possible combinations of colors (two blacks, one white; one black, two whites), three white discs are affixed to the prisoners? The first scenario (two blacks, one white) affords one of the three prisoners immediate, absolute certainty as to his/her color: "Since there are only two black discs in the set of five, and I see two blacks before me, I must, therefore, be white." As

Lacan says, "hesitation is logically excluded for whoever sees two blacks" (Lacan 1988, 7).

The second scenario (one black, two whites) is slightly more complicated. One of the three prisoners will see one black and one white disc. This alone doesn't provide him/her with the requisite certainty necessary for release. However, as soon as the other prisoner with the white disk hesitates in the same manner as the prisoner just described, this prisoner confronted with the initially ambiguous data (one black, one white) knows with full certainty his/her own color: "I see one black and one white disc. If I were black, the other prisoner with the white disk would immediately know that she/he is necessarily white. But, the prisoner with the white disc is hesitating like myself. Therefore, I must be white too." Thus, in the second scenario, a single moment of hesitation on the part of the observed white prisoner is sufficient to enable the prisoner who sees one white and one black disc to conclude that she/he is, without any question, also white—"their hesitating but for an instant would clearly suffice to reconvince each of them beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is a white" (Lacan 1988, 7).

The third scenario (three whites) is the most complex situation of the three possible combinations of colored discs. Each prisoner is confronted with the sight of two white discs. So, a more elaborate reasoning process is required for deducing one's own color. First, each prisoner must begin by hypothetically assigning himself/herself a color. Each prisoner would be best advised to suppose himself/herself to be black. If the individual prisoner is black, as she/he hypothesizes, and the other two are white (which, in fact, they are), then each of the white prisoners facing the prisoner who supposes himself/herself to be black should undergo the reasoning process outlined previously in the second scenario. Consequently, two moments of hesitation are involved in the third scenario: First, the hesitation resulting from the testing of the two hypothetical possibilities as to one's own color; and, second, the hesitation necessitated by a hypothesized recapitulation of the reasoning process intrinsic to the second scenario.

However, this explanation oversimplifies matters. None of the prisoners is black. The hypothesis that each one makes as to being black is, in actuality, false. The only means that each prisoner has for testing his/her hypothetical identity is the reaction of the other two prisoners. If one or more of them makes haste towards the exit after only a single moment of hesitation, then the hypothesis of the third that she/he is black seems as if it has received confirmation. But, as soon as this third prisoner—presupposing himself/herself to be black on the basis of the others' haste—jumps up in order to join in the rush to reach the door, the others auto-

matically hesitate a second time. In the second scenario (one black, two whites), a single moment of hesitation is all that is needed to correctly convince one of the whites as to his/her proper identity. This hesitation is linked to the single hypothesis demanded of the white confronted with one white and one black disc: The hypothetical, imaginary substitution whereby one of the white prisoners puts himself/herself in the shoes of the other white prisoner by supposing that if this other sees two blacks, she/he would have already exited.

The second moment of hesitation involved in the third scenario (three whites) results from the peculiar codependency of the prisoners caught in this specular, intersubjective trap.[8] However, the erroneous hypothesis of being black must be made by one of the prisoners in order for any of them to rigorously deduce their own color. Without the second moment of hesitation precipitated by the third prisoner's unjustified urgency to reach the door based on a false belief in being black, nobody would realize that she/he is white. After this second hesitation, all three should be led to conclude that they are each white. Lacan, designating the third observing prisoner "A" and the other two being observed "B" and "C," respectively, brings out this situation as follows:

> But while A can correctly impute to the others a thought process which is in fact false (as we have just shown), he can, nevertheless, only take into account B and C's real behavior.
>
> If A, seeing B and C set off with him, wonders again whether they have not in fact seen that he is black, it suffices for him to stop and pose the question again in order to answer it. For he sees that they too have stopped: since each of them is really in the same situation as he, or more aptly stated, *is* A insofar as real—i.e., insofar as he resolves or fails to resolve to conclude about himself—each encounters the same doubt at the same moment as he. (Lacan 1988, 7)

Generalizing from this particular scenario to its larger consequences, Lacan subsequently claims that:

> Withstanding the test of critical discussion, this sophism thus maintains all the constraining rigor of a logical process, on condition that one integrates therein the value of the two *suspensive scansions*. This test shows the process of verification in the very act in which each of the subjects manifests that it has led him to his conclusion. (Lacan 1988, 8)

As early as 1946, the later Lacanian motifs of the "symbolic order," "the big Other," "intersubjective logic," and the "trap of/for the gaze" are distinctly

foreshadowed. Various commentaries on this "logical sophism" focus heavily on the subjective dependency illustrated in Lacan's tale (the best summary of Lacan's text, especially from this perspective, is Bruce Fink's "Logical Time and the Precipitation of Subjectivity").[9] Apart from these themes, what is the significance of Lacan's invocation of time in this text?

Lacan's essay extracts three "temporal" structures from the prisoners' dilemma—the "instant of the glance," the "time for comprehending," and the "moment of concluding." The first scenario (two blacks, one white) entails no hesitation for the white prisoner; as soon as she/he sees two black discs, she/he knows the color of his/her disc. Lacan calls this the "instant of the glance."[10] The second scenario (one black, two whites) involves a single period of delay; one and/or both of the whites pauses in order to observe the haste and/or hesitation of the other white. This delay, caused by the imaginary assumption of the place of the other—the other white as one's mirror image, as one's alter-ego—is the "time for comprehending," the activity of comprehending referring to the deduction conducted via the mediation of one's subjective complement. The third scenario (three whites) includes the previous two temporal structures, plus an additional "third time." Each prisoner, in the instant of the glance, sees two white discs. With the failure to achieve the required certainty for release in this specular instant, the second temporal structure (the time for comprehending) results from each prisoner testing the false hypothesis of himself/herself being black—the hypothetical recapitulation of the reasoning process inherent to the second scenario.[11]

Just as the instant of the glance fails to produce conviction in any prisoner stuck in the third scenario, so too does the subsequent time for comprehending engender yet another hesitation. But, after the second pause, it almost certainly dawns on each prisoner (assuming them to be of relatively equal intelligence) that she/he must be white. However, only the first prisoner to reach the door and explain himself/herself to the warden wins release.[12] A genuine sense of urgency is connected with reaching the conclusion, "Therefore, I am a white." This panicked "moment of concluding" is the Lacanian "precipitation of subjectivity."[13] Faced with the artificial constraints of a *grand Autre* (the prison administration and its perverted, rule-bound game) into which one is propelled without knowing what one's identity is within this symbolic matrix, one must deduce one's "I" with the imaginarily-borrowed eyes of others. Yet, one is also competing with those whose inadvertent cooperation/complicity is necessary for the deduction of one's own identity. If there was doubt at the outset of this exposition as to why Lacan, as a psychoanalyst, would be interested in such a puzzle, then it should now be apparent. For Lacan, the moment of concluding is that point at which the unconscious "I"—what "I" was accord-

ing to the big Other without knowing it, that is, the invisible disc outside one's own field of vision— suddenly emerges in an anxious flash. This is Lacan's earliest innovation in his sustained reinterpretation of Freud's "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*"—which is typically misinterpreted as saying, "The ego must dislodge the id." The "I" comes to be in recognizing how it itself was already marked by the *grand Autre,* in seeing how the "unary trait" (Freud's *ein einziger Zug*) reflecting one's identity is a pre-given signifier fashioned within the framework of the symbolic order.[14]

Lacan derives the genesis of the psychological "I" from the movement whereby the logical "I" is born. This logical birth is what Lacan illustrates with the prisoners' dilemma:

> This movement of the 'I''s logical genesis through a decanting of its own logical time largely parallels its psychological birth. Just as, let us recall, the psychological 'I' emerges [*se dégage*] from an indeterminate specular transitivism, asserted by an awakened jealous tendency, the 'I' in question here defines itself through a subjectification of *competition* with the other, in the function of logical time. As such, the 'I' in question seems to provide the essential logical form (rather than what is called the existential form) of the psychological 'I.' (Lacan 1988, 14)

A reader familiar with Lacan is bound to recognize the striking similarity of this consequence of logical time with the ramifications of his model of aggression; "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," originally presented in 1948 and later published in the *Écrits,* dates from only two years after "Logical Time." The "transivitism" of "paranoid knowledge"—this paranoid knowledge also connects the 1946 and 1948 pieces with Lacan's 1932 doctoral thesis in medicine[15]—is the common link between these two essays from the 1940s. The symbolic order of the disc game places the prisoners in a competition in which the time for understanding is a paranoid mechanism of substituting oneself for the other by virtue of the necessary method of deducing one's own identity within the game's constraints. Furthermore, one of Lacan's goals in "Aggressivity in psychoanalysis" is to elucidate the Freudian death drive. Is it a mere coincidence that, as with Freud, the topics of psychoanalytic time and the (death) drive find themselves in close proximity to each other?

The logical time essay stipulates that the Lacanian theory of aggression is not to be read as a psychological theory. For Lacan, the affective phenomenon of aggression is a by-product of the logicostructural configuration of the ego–object dialectic. By providing a logical model of the Imaginary–Symbolic connection in the formation of psychoanalytic subjectivity—the links running from the Imaginary instant of the glance,

through the time for understanding, to the Symbolic moment of concluding—Lacan's 1946 essay serves as the "transcendental" foundation for the more ethnological claims at stake in the model of aggression. Observations of infants and animals provide Lacan with much of his early rhetorical material in both the 1936/1949 elaborations of the mirror stage and the 1948 explanation of aggression.[16] In an interesting reading of Lacan, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen asserts that Lacan's earliest concepts—the mirror stage, aggressivity, and the "family complexes"—form the disavowed yet necessary foundations for all the later work.[17] Despite the supremacy of the Symbolic in the 1950s and the rise of the Real in the 1960s and early 1970s[18]—Slavoj Žižek, for instance, shrewdly highlights a reversal occurring around the theory of the analyzed subject in this shift from the hegemony of the Symbolic to dominance of the Real[19]—the Imaginary, epitomized by the ethnologically elaborated *imago,* is the true substratum of the Lacanian subject. But Borch-Jacobsen's failure to understand the central role of the logical time text in this early period is the means by which his interpretation unjustifiably sustains itself. Lacan's notions of ego and subject must be understood, at least from Lacan's perspective on his own work, as arising from the structural dialectic of the Imaginary and the Symbolic—that is, not from a historical–anthropological starting point, but from a "logical" one.

Furthermore, even in the text that Borch-Jacobsen relies upon in alleging the repressed primacy of the Imaginary, the "Symbolic Lacan" is nonetheless clearly its author. One of the key terms used in the 1938 "Family Complexes" piece is "complex" (a term later to be dropped and replaced by the Symbolic, the *Nom-du-Père,* and so on). Defining this concept, Lacan says:

> Complexes have . . . been shown to play the role of 'organizers' in psychic development. They thus control those phenomena which seem to consciousness to be most closely integrated into the personality; so that it is not only the justifications for emotional attitudes but also objectifiable rationalizations that find a motivation in the unconscious. (Lacan 2001a, 29–30)

As transindividual, nonpsychological "organizers," complexes behave similarly to the matrix of the (Oedipal) symbolic order in the Lacan of the 1950s.[20] Lacan rejects turning psychoanalysis into a type of depth psychology. He subjugates such phenomena as affects and genetic–historical developments to a structural configuration irreducible to the individual psyche. Lacan continues:

> [T]he most striking flaw in analytic doctrine: the neglect of the structural in favor of the dynamic. Despite this, analytic experience itself contributes to the study of mental forms by revealing their link—either as conditions or as solutions—with affective crises. It is by differentiating the formal influence of the complex that one can establish a more clear-cut relationship between its functions and the structure of the drama essential to it. (Lacan 2001a, 51)

By psychoanalysis favoring the "dynamic," Lacan evidently means its tendencies to emphasize such factors as affectivity, object relations, interpersonal emotive bonds, and so on as part of a linear developmental progress in the mental life of the individual. For Lacan, what must precede these more psychological inquiries into the formation of the subject is a thorough foundation laid by a structural account of "the formal influence of the complex;" similarly, his recasting of the Oedipus complex in the 1950s treats the structural categories of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary as quasi-Kantian possibility conditions for the anthropomorphic version of the familial drama.[21] Eight years prior to the piece on logical time, the prioritization of the "logical 'I'" over the genesis of the "psychological 'I'" is just as operative.

Jacques-Alain Miller stresses the fact that Lacan, in his early years and especially apropos the logical time essay, subordinates the phenomenology of the Imaginary to the structural relations ultimately dictated by the Symbolic. Miller states:

> There is objective time, as measured by clocks, and subjective time: time of maintained interest, time to end . . . and so on. From a phenomenological point of view, you may distinguish between objective and subjective time. But Lacan doesn't approach subjective time through a description of feelings which cannot be narrated, attempting to grasp the inner feeling of temporality (as found in poetry, for example); he tries to find the logic of subjective time. (Miller 1996a, 12)

Miller's accurate rebuttal of something along the lines of Borch-Jacobsen's critique (Lacan's early work as underpinned by empirical/experiential rather than structural considerations) nonetheless leads to a question of capital importance to this project: Is "the logic of subjective time" itself a psychoanalytic theory of time per se? Miller makes it quite evident that Lacan rejects the phenomenological resonance of the quasi-technical term "temporality."[22] What's more, Lacan doesn't use the term "time" by itself as a freestanding idea, but as part of a "subjective logic."

What does Lacan have to say about the role of time in his 1946 essay? To begin with, Lacan sees himself as successfully dismantling the opposition between the eternal synchrony of logic and the transitory diachrony of the non/extra-logical:

> It is precisely because our sophism will not tolerate a spatialized conception that it presents itself as an aporia for the forms of classical logic, whose 'eternal' prestige reflects an infirmity which is, nonetheless, recognized as their own, i.e., these forms never furnish us anything which cannot already *be seen at a single stroke* [*d'un seul coup*]. In complete opposition to this, the coming into play as signifiers of the phenomena contested here makes the temporal, not spatial, structure of the logical process prevail. What the *suspended motions* disclose is not what the subjects see, but rather what they have found out positively about *what they do not see:* the appearance of the black discs. That which constitutes these suspended motions as signifying is not their direction, but rather their interruption [*temps d'arrêt*]. Their crucial value is not that of a binary choice between two inertly juxtaposed combinations—rendered incomplete by the visual exclusion of the third—but rather of a verificatory movement instituted by a logical process in which a subject transforms the three possible combinations into three *times of possibility.* (Lacan 1988, 9)

According to Lacan, "classical logic" performs its truth operations in a strictly synchronic fashion ("*at a single stroke*"). In other words, a logical syllogism, for instance, can assert a true conclusion only in the instantaneous and/or simultaneous presentation of two properly related premises. Resorting to a hackneyed example familiar to any teacher of introductory logic, the truth of "Socrates is mortal" hinges upon the co-present connection between the true claims "All men are mortal" and "Socrates is a man." For Lacan, this required simultaneity of two true premises is indicative of a "spatial" (that is, synchronic) structure.

By contrast, Lacan conceives of his "new sophism" as a challenge to the confinement of logic within spatiosynchronic organizations. Because of the irreducibly necessary role of the hesitations occurring at specific moments in the disc game—none of the subjects in the game is able to deduce his/her own disc color in a fashion rigorous enough to satisfy the warden's requirements for release without explaining the two hesitations as premises in his/her "subjective proof"—Lacan is convinced that he succeeds in developing a temporalized logic *à la* his "three *times of possibility.*" Since the hesitations are arguably different-in-kind from the visual data secured through the glance at the other prisoners—these hesitations are

claimed not to be "inert juxtaposed combinations"—and yet are themselves vital to the solution of the dilemma, Lacan maintains that:

> Far from being experiential data external to the logical process, the *suspended motions* are so necessary to it that only experience can make the logical process here lack the synchronicity implied by the suspended motions as produced by a purely logical subject; only experience can make their function in the verification process founder.
>
> The suspended motions represent nothing, in effect, but levels of degradation in which necessity engenders an increasing order of temporal instances which are registered within the logical process so as to be integrated into its conclusion.
>
> This can be seen in the logical determination of the *interruptions* they constitute, this determination—whether logician's objection or subject's doubt—revealing itself at each moment as the subjective unfolding of a temporal instance, or more aptly stated, as the slipping away (*fuite*) of the subject within a formal exigency.
>
> These temporal instances, constitutive of the process of the sophism, permit us to recognize therein a true logical movement. (Lacan 1988, 10)

Are these "temporal instances" therefore equivalent to the "true logical movement" of the sophism? If so, is a logic integrating such movements no longer spatiosynchronic? Lacan believes that the disk game is something synchronic only in the case where two black discs are used—namely, the game as dictated solely by the "lightening-flash" of the instant of the glance. Do the irreducible pauses necessary for both the time for understanding as well as the moment of concluding guarantee obedience to an entirely different logic?

Lacan allows himself to slide from a difference-in-degree to a difference-in-kind. The hesitations in the second two "temporal logics" of the game are already prefigured in advance by the possible combinations of disc colors as well as the various constraints placed on the participants (the need for a rigorous logical explanation of one's decision, the impossibility of communication, the absence of reflective surfaces, and so on). Based on this set of rules given *"d'un seul coup,"* the temporal choreography of the three prisoners, regardless of what combination of disc colors is selected, is preemptively delineated prior to their actual motions. Lacan's temporal logic is a false temporality, a staged time in which the diachronic unfolding of crucial moments is immanent to the synchronic script of the *grand Autre.*

Seen through the lens of the rules given in advance, the delays are

transformed from being durational events to being inert pieces of data on the same level as the visible disc colors of the other prisoners. The temporal quality of the hesitations is incidental to the role they play in the structure of the game. Insofar as they must eventually become legible as premises in a logical proof whose conclusion is "I am x" (either "I am a white" or "I am a black"), the delays in the second two "temporal orders" (the time for understanding and the moment for concluding) are, after an elapse of time, transformed into static information-elements pointing to a single conclusion. Although the game unfolds diachronically from one angle (from the limited perspective of the prisoners prior to figuring out their colors), the retroactive *point de capiton*—Lacan incorporates and nuances Freud's *Nachträglichkeit* in his concept of the "quilting point"—generated in the moment of concluding reveals the always–already present regime of the penal big Other. Referring to Lacan's "graph of desire"—originally presented in the fifth seminar of 1957–1958 (*Formations of the Unconscious*),[23] and later published as part of "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" in *Écrits*—in which the *point de capiton* is a central operator, Žižek writes:

> Why do we find O—that is, the big Other as the synchronous symbolic code—at the *point de capiton*? Is not the *point de capiton* precisely the One, a singular signifier occupying an exceptional place with respect to the paradigmatic network of the code? To understand this apparent incoherence, we have only to remember that the *point de capiton* fixes the meaning of the preceding elements: that is to say, it retroactively submits them to some code, it regulates their mutual relations according to this code . . . We could say that the *point de capiton* represents, holds the place of, the big Other, the synchronous code, in the diachronous signifier's chain: a proper Lacanian paradox in which a synchronous, paradigmatic *structure* exists only in so far as it is itself again embodied in One, in an exceptional singular *element*.
>
> From what we have just said, it is also clear why the other cross point of the two vectors is marked by *s*(O): at this point we find the signified, the meaning, which is a function of the big Other—which is produced as a retroactive effect of 'quilting,' backwards from the point at which the relation between floating signifiers is fixed through reference to the synchronous symbolic code. (Žižek 1989, 103)

Žižek's remarks help to clarify Lacan's 1946 error: Only from the limited perspective of the uncertain prisoner are the hesitations of his/her counterparts temporal since, for both the prison warden (the big Other, with its "network of the code," qua the rules of the game) and the very same

prisoner after-the-fact of concluding with certainty as to his/her color, everything is already given in advance (a given-ness seen as a retroactive *in toto* by the prisoner finally possessing conclusive certainty). The temporal enactment of the reality of the symbolic order does nothing to change this order's static nature.

Lacan falls prey to a perspectival illusion. That is, the prisoners' conclusions amount to deciphering, through the rules provided them by the prison administration, the fait accompli of the warden's prior selection of the discs that adorn them. In the parlance of the Lacan of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the moment of concluding yields the "master signifier" (the $S^1$ expressed by "Therefore, I am a white") by which the illusory temporality of the game (the $S^2$s of the two moments of hesitation) is dissipated in the flash of the quilting *après-coup*.[24] After arriving at a conclusion, each prisoner necessarily perceives how the hesitations of himself/herself and his/her companions are already built into the game by the rules and the particular combination of disc colors. Without perceiving this (and, moreover, being able to explain it in the form of a proof), no deduction sufficient to merit release can be formulated. The experiential durationality of the delays preceding the moment of concluding—this moment is indeed the location of the synchronic hooking of the *point de capiton*—congeals into the rigidity of evidence, evidence as immediately accessible to the backwards glance of identificatory certainty as the disc colors offered to the spatialized instant of the glance. This Lacanian illusion of perspective repeats itself at the end of his teaching. The late Lacan's vision is similarly fooled by the imagery of topological objects.

## §7 Chance, Automaticity, and the Impossible Cause of Real Time

The 1940s emphasis on the logical genesis of the "I" qua psychoanalytic subject—"Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty" should be read as the a priori underpinning of contemporaneous anthropological, ethnological, and Imaginary developments in Lacan's thought—heralds the explicit glorification of the Symbolic in the structuralist period of the 1950s. Even as early as 1938, the notion of "complex" merely awaits eventual corroboration by the assertions of Claude Lévi-Strauss's 1949 *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*.[25] What happens in the 1960s? Do the conclusions of the logical time essay hold throughout the rest of Lacan's seminars? The answer involves both a "yes" and a "no."

The second representative slice of Lacanian theory here comes

from one of his most famous works, the eleventh seminar of 1964, entitled *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Fortunately, Lacan himself provides a direct transition between the 1946 logical time essay and his teachings of the mid-sixties:

> It is apparent that the very level of the definition of the unconscious—to refer only to what Freud says about it, in a necessarily approximate way, being able at first to use it only in hesitant touches here and there, when discussing the primary process—that what happens there is inaccessible to contradiction, to spatio-temporal location and also to the function of time.
>
> Now, although desire merely conveys what it maintains of an image of the past towards an ever short and limited future, Freud declares that it is nevertheless *indestructible*. Notice that in the term indestructible, it is precisely the most inconsistent reality of all that is affirmed. If indestructible desire escapes from time, to what register does it belong in the order of things? For what is a thing, if not that which endures, in an identical state, for a certain time? Is not this the place to distinguish in addition to duration, the substance of things, another mode of time—a logical time? You know I have already touched on this theme in one of my essays. (*SXI,* 31–32)

By all appearances, Lacan embraces the previously criticized ramifications of logical time. In seeming to connect the indestructibility of Freudian desire with "another mode of time—a logical time," Lacan identifies the synchronic reabsorption of temporal duration as the very essence of logical time (itself being the "time" of an unchanging unconscious desire). Later, in the question and answer period following the seminar session in which the above passage is situated ("Of the Subject of Certainty," January 29, 1964), Lacan spells out how the temporality of logical time is merely the pre-orchestrated result of the game's synchronic rules:

> X: *Are not logical time and time-substance identical?* Lacan: Logical time is constituted by three stages. First, *the moment of seeing*—which is not without mystery, although correctly enough defined in the psychological experience of the intellectual operation that is called *insight*. Secondly, *the stage of understanding*. Thirdly, *the moment to conclude*. This is merely a reminder. In order to understand logical time, one must set out with the presupposition that from the outset the signifying battery is given. (*SXI,* 39)

The "signifying battery" that "from the outset . . . is given" is the set of elements, constraints, and stipulations put forward by the prison warden as

big Other. Eighteen years after the original argument, Lacan stealthily changes his tune on the significance of temporality in the prisoners' dilemma. Whereas in 1946 he erroneously asserts that his three logical times challenge the spatial simultaneity ("*d'un seul coup*") of "classical logic," in 1964 he transforms the necessary failure of this challenge into a conceptual virtue. In other words, the disc game is exemplary in demonstrating why the Freudian unconscious is timeless, why its apparently temporal unfolding is, in fact, an epiphenomenal effect dictated by structures that are out of joint with time.

Nonetheless, in this same seminar, Lacan presents, in comparison to his previous efforts, a more refined theory of psychoanalytic temporality. If logical time is itself simply a mirage of durational temporality, being at root the overdetermined acting-out of a preexistent order, then where is one to find "genuine time" in analysis? Funnily enough, the answer is "nowhere"—however, this is not just any "nowhere." Through an examination of Aristotle's musings on causality—Lacan isolates the terms "*tuché*" and "*automaton*" as the keys to his renewed efforts at grasping the place of time in Freudian psychoanalysis—Lacan arrives at a means of explaining exactly why the unconscious is ignorant of the passage of time. He maintains unambiguously that "it is in the dimension of synchrony that you must situate the unconscious" (*SXI,* 26). In his seminar on anxiety from the previous year, he words it thus—"there is . . . prior to everything that we can elaborate or understand . . . the presence of the Other. There is no self-analysis; even when one imagines it, the Other is there" (*SX,* 11/21/62).

Lacan's conception of time/temporality in the mid-sixties is intimately linked to considerations of "cause." Throughout the seminars of this period, two main dichotomies are operative, both of them aligned along the two poles of the Real and the Symbolic—cause (Real) versus law (Symbolic), and *tuché* (Real) versus *automaton* (Symbolic). Speaking of the causality of the unconscious, Lacan says, "the cause of the unconscious . . . must be conceived as, fundamentally, a lost cause" (*SXI,* 128). The Lacanian recuperation of time here, after its loss in the Symbolic overdetermination of the Other's logical time, entails elaborating the means by which time is always–already lost in the Symbolic digestion of the Real.

Before examining the specifics of causality and time in the eleventh seminar, an understanding of certain preparatory articulations regarding these matters from the previous year's seminar is required. Although Aristotle is the philosopher of causality mentioned by Lacan in 1964, Kant is the primary figure of concern apropos this topic in 1962 to 1963. Lacan directs his audience's attention to the *Critique of Pure Reason* as containing the prototype of his own notion of cause:

> . . . in the progress of epistemology, the isolation of the notion of cause has produced considerable difficulties . . . It is clear on the other hand that whatever reduction one submits it to, what one might call the mental function of this notion cannot be eliminated, reduced to a sort of metaphysical shadow. We clearly sense that there is something, which it is too little to say that is a recourse to intuition, which makes it subsist, which remains around this function of cause, and I claim that it is starting from the re-examination that we can make of it, starting from analytic experience, that the whole *Critique of Pure Reason,* brought up to date with our science, could re-establish a correct status of cause. (*SX,* 1/16/63)

Of course, to bring Kant "up to date with our science" means nothing else than to juxtapose the critical apparatus and the concept of the unconscious. Lacan remarks that "the mental function" of cause cannot be eliminated. Furthermore, he cautions that this psychical ineliminability of causality is not to be sought through "recourse to intuition." Translating this into more familiar Freudian terminology, the insistence of cause is not to be found within the limits of the perception-consciousness system. In an implied manner in the above passage—and an explicit fashion elsewhere—Lacan situates the insistence of the function of causality in relation to the register of the Symbolic unconscious.

Psychoanalysis is often viewed as a sort of mental determinism. On one level, this is correct. Insofar as the analyst's ear is concerned, nothing uttered by the patient, at least in principle, escapes being encoded by unconscious meanings. Bungled actions and accidental misfortunes are all read through the lens of analytic theory as manifestations of the unconscious. Their "chance" appearance is relative to the perspective of the conscious ego, itself ignorant of the truth of psychical desire:

> *Certain shortcomings in our psychical functioning . . . and certain seemingly unintentional performances prove, if psycho-analytic methods of investigation are applied to them, to have valid motives and to be determined by motives unknown to consciousness.* (*SE* 6: 239)

Later, in the same chapter on "Determinism, Belief in Chance and Superstition—Some Points of View" from *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* Freud remarks that, "One could venture . . . to transform *metaphysics* into *metapsychology*" (*SE* 6: 259). Why is this transformation mentioned in a chapter on the mental overdetermination of chance/accident? Why here, and not in the metapsychological papers, does Freud reveal his philosophical ambitions?

Through the process of "critique," Kant also integrally changes the status, nature, and potentials of metaphysics. In a famous passage from the 1787 preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant states:

> Thus far it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to objects. On that presupposition, however, all our attempts to establish something about them a priori, by means of concepts through which our cognition would be expanded, have come to nothing. Let us, therefore, try to find out by experiment whether we shall not make better progress in the problems of metaphysics if we assume that objects must conform to our cognition.—This assumption already agrees better with the demanded possibility of an a priori cognition of objects—i.e., a cognition that is to ascertain something about them before they are given to us. The situation here is the same as was that of *Copernicus* when he first thought of explaining the motions of celestial bodies. Having found it difficult to make progress there when he assumed that the entire host of stars revolved around the spectator, he tried to find out by experiment whether he might not be more successful if he had the spectator revolve and the stars remain at rest. (Kant 1996, 21 [B xvi])

Freud's interpretation of chance operates in a fashion analogous to the Kantian critical-idealist gesture: Instead of events or experiences being determined solely by external factors that seem accidental from the perspective of the conscious victim of circumstance, events are always–already caught in the matrix of unconscious significance. The unconscious compulsively integrates all circumstances into its web of associative connections. Or, in Hegelian terms, the ego's "beautiful soul" denounces its own internal intentions and desires as exterior, accidental, and malicious forces.[26] For Freud, there is no such thing as objective chance. To the extent that material falls within the analytic field, itself defined by the a priori assumption of the unconscious, its "objectivity" is invariably prefigured by the template of the metapsychological subject and its cognizing functions; psychoanalysis is, indeed, situated in the lineage of philosophical idealism. Thus, through a Freudian "critique of pure desire"—"pure desire" being the illusory intentions of the ego, the idea that one can desire without the interference of the unconscious—metaphysics becomes psychoanalytic metapsychology.

Lacan's reference to Kant in connection with causality establishes this implicit link between Kant and Freud on the issue of the relation between chance and causality. Additionally, reading the tenth seminar retroactively through the lens of the eleventh seminar, Kant's subtle

handling of causality in the antinomies of pure reason is the part of the first *Critique* most crucial for this aspect of Lacanian theory. The law of cause and effect states that every effect has a cause behind it. For a philosopher, everything available to human perception is, on one level or another, an effect; in fact, the entire natural world could be seen as an effect. Reasoning backward with the law of cause and effect, such things as the "unmoved mover" (the Aristotelian "prime mover") or "the origin of the world" (envisioned through theology as God-the-creator and through astrophysics as the "big bang") become presuppositions foisted on the human mind as a result of its adherence to the rules of its own reason.[27]

But, as Kant notes in accordance with his critical turn, one cannot ever encounter such first causes from within the unsurpassable confines of the limits of possible experience.[28] One cannot intuit an originary *Ur*-event or a divine creator. At the phenomenal level, there is no first cause; from within the limits of possible experience, grounded in its reference to the faculty of intuition, the natural world is an unfathomably extended series of causes and effects. Put differently, the chain of causality runs on indefinitely without ever reaching a terminal point. However, for the faculty of reason—stretching beyond the field of given experience sustained by the dual participation of intuition and the understanding—a first cause is a necessary idea. The law of cause and effect forces the notion of a primordial cause upon human cognition. Kant claims that previous metaphysical systems view the two propositions of the antinomies plaguing the ideas of pure reason—for instance, in the first of the antinomies, the thesis "The world has a beginning" and the antithesis "The world has no beginning" initially appear to a metaphysical viewpoint as contradictory statements—exclusively as indications of a simple deadlock awaiting future resolution. By drawing the distinction between the rational and the experiential, Kant reconciles the "contradictory" antinomy without exceeding the limits of subjective cognition. In other words, insofar as one is an epistemological agent incapable of exceeding the limits of one's experience, one is unable to treat a first cause as a possible object of experience waiting to be eventually uncovered by metaphysical or empirical investigation. But, insofar as one is also a subject of reason, one can (and indeed must) posit first causes by virtue of the rational maxim of causality rendering the fabric of experience intelligible.[29]

How are these basic Kantian arguments relevant to Lacanian psychoanalysis? Why does Lacan cite Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as indispensable in the effort to "re-establish a correct status of cause"? Through the dualism of the "cause of *tuché*" and the "law of *automaton*," Lacan intertwines Freud's axiom that nothing in psychical structure happens by chance with Kant's treatment of cause, refining the former through the

use of the latter. Freud appears to indulge himself in an interpretive tyranny similar to the analytic rule regarding *Verneinung*—if every "no" signals an unconscious "yes," then the analysand is seemingly powerless to contest the analyst's interpretations. What if, for instance, the patient really isn't able to make it to a session on a particular day? What if a family member dies and they have to miss their appointment with the analyst? Although apparently at once both absurd and excessively cruel, the analyst might very well read this death as participating in unconscious desire. However, this is far from asserting that the patient actually wished for the family member to die in order to be excused from the obligation of visiting the analyst.

Through recourse to Kant, the analytic refusal to accept an event like an unexpected death in the family as "purely accidental" is both conceivable and surprisingly compelling. At the phenomenal level of the ego, the death is understandably experienced as a horrible, contingent circumstance. However, the timeless unconscious operating under the sway of the primary processes—this same unconscious evidently recognizes no chronological hierarchy between the inscribed mnemic traces of events from different periods—always–already places the contingent event in connection with other unconscious materials. The accidental death of the family member is especially traumatizing because the individual's unconscious inevitably cognizes it as the belated fulfillment of, for example, an Oedipal childhood death wish against another relative occupying a parallel familial position in the individual's past. This insistence on assigning significance to otherwise contingent events is the result of the "laws of (unconscious) reason." (An irony of the Lacanian rereading of the Freudian unconscious is that the qualities of the Kantian faculty of reason become those most applicable to the supposedly "irrational" unconscious.) Although pure chance exists, the unconscious is incapable of experiencing it as such and in itself. Lacan's previously enigmatic remark about the "lost cause" of the unconscious becomes perfectly comprehensible in this light. Like a good Kantian, Lacan proclaims the "primordial cause" to be "anterior to all this phenomenology."[30]

Furthermore, the Lacanian mantra about the "impossibility of the Real" is inherent to this line of thinking. In 1956, Lacan formulates it thus—"the real is the limit of our experience" (*SIV,* 31). "Our experience" can be read in two ways—as analytic experience, in which the analyst brackets Real chance (*tuché*) in interpreting the Symbolic matrix of unconscious meanings (*automaton*),[31] and as the experience of every subject, in which the conscious experience of accidental events is unavoidably submitted to the codifying operations of the unconscious Other's automaticity. The unconscious "structured like a language" is a regulative

principle resulting from Lacan's recognition of the Real as a limit to the ambitions of psychoanalytic reason.[32] Unfortunately, almost every interpreter of Lacan commits the precritical, metaphysical error of taking it to be a constitutive principle.[33]

Another thread of continuity stretching from the logical time essay of 1946 to the state of Lacan's thought in the 1960s is pertinent here—the recasting of Freud's "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden.*" Where the phenomena of accidental chance were, there must the subject of the unconscious come to be. Only through, so to speak, the "bad faith" (*mauvais foi*) of the beautiful soul's Imaginary ego is this injunction to subjectivize denied. *Tuché,* which Lacan interprets as "chance" (*hasard*), is the impossible Real qua the irruptive time of the undetermined, unanticipatable event. (Hence, Lacan connects it to a discussion of trauma in Freud's dream example "Father, can't you see I'm burning?" Freud defines trauma as an event for which the psychical apparatus is unprepared.)[34] *Automaton,* on the other hand, is the compulsive subjectivization-effect whereby the unconscious immediately weaves the Real event into the texture of a Symbolic fabric.[35] Lacan concludes that the unconscious is, as Freud maintains, timeless. It cannot experience time, and operates so as to foreclose any encounter with events "in themselves," with the uniqueness of a disruptive, traumatic now-point devoid of meaning through any reference to the past. Lacan contends that the true subject of psychoanalysis—the subject of the unconscious—is defined, in part, by its incapacity with respect to what Bergson might call the intuiting of *durée;* in Bergsonian parlance, the "spatial" subject of the synchronic unconscious automatically thwarts a direct confrontation with the Real of the pure flux of durationality. To put it poetically, the psychic operates so as to exclude the "tychic."[36]

From this, Antoine Vergote draws the obvious consequence, a consequence inadvertently affirmed in the logical time essay: The diachrony of Real time is either foreclosed, or, if anything temporal is admitted within the field constitutive of the Lacanian subject, it is nothing more than the choreographed residue of "the discourse of the Other." Thus, Vergote notes, synchronicity always has the upper hand in Lacan's system:

> The unconscious is the discourse of the Other. But what is this discourse? The Other is itself found to be under the sovereignty of language. The subject and the Other find themselves, in their discourse, at the interior of a language that is preordained. This means that the synchronic structure of language dominates the historical time of discourse. The future anterior ultimately refers to the atemporal synchronicity of language. (Vergote 1983, 208–209)

Vergote contends that the *point de capiton,* endlessly hailed by Lacan's faithful as the proper Lacanian model of temporality,[37] is simply a redoubled synchronicity. Just as the hesitations of the prisoners remain temporal only until the "moment of concluding," so too is the signifying chain of the Lacanian unconscious diachronous only until the "moment of punctuation." After this point, the chain is submitted to the timelessness of the big Other, to the symbolic order from which it emerged. The diachronous chain always returns to the synchronous place from whence it came.

Some differences are worth noting between the 1946 and the 1964 elisions of temporality. In 1946, Lacan asserts that his three logical times undercut the hegemony of static, spatialized logic. But this shows itself to be a mere illusion of perspective. In 1964, this necessary failure of logical time becomes a virtue: Lacan twists it into a rationalization for the timeless quality of the unconscious. And yet, the *tuché* of time in terms of the event in the Real, despite its always–already excluded status in the Symbolic unconscious, is retained in an explicit manner. With the disc game, nothing on the order of *tuché* exists; the temporal lags are not accidental, random, or actually durational, but are, rather, pre-scripted effects of the *grand Autre.* Logical time is Symbolic through and through (with the Imaginary playing a supporting role therein). Nothing that happens after the warden designs the game and assigns each prisoner a disc is unpredictable—nothing traumatic, in terms of an unanticipated "little piece of the Real,"[38] can find a place in this scenario.

In the 1960s, on the other hand, the timelessness of the Symbolic unconscious *automaton* is, despite its continual closing-in upon itself, always buffeted by the impacts of Real events. Although this unconscious absorbs/integrates each now-point of psychically significant occurrences into its nonchronological system, the very contours of this system are shaped by the constant intrusion of the Real. The Symbolic unconscious weaves itself around the points of impact left by traumatic encounters. Hence, the unconscious of a subject existing in time is comparable to the signifying chain of binary units deployed by Lacan in the postface to the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" (versions of which are contained in both the 1954–1955 second seminar and the 1966 edition of the *Écrits*). In a nonterminating chain—that is, the open-ended, future-oriented existence of the living, historicogenetic subject—each additional element has the potential to alter the rules by which an ordering of the sequence of alterations in the binary units can be superimposed upon the chain. As the units accumulate, certain rules determining possible groupings of combinations subsequently appear; and, new units or groupings of units can also retroactively alter or displace previous rules.[39] Lacan calls this

effect a "temporal modulation."[40] Andrew Cutrofello observes that this "bi-directional" temporality of the signifying chain establishes the Lacanian idea of unconscious "truth" as the one ignored category of truth in the Kantian system—the analytic a posteriori. The truth (of the subject), defined for the analyst as a set of unconscious rules, comes to be through the diachronous unraveling of associational, signifying chains. Despite this historicization, Lacan insists upon retaining an idea of logically delineable truth; hence, his truth (as analytic) is genetic (a posteriori).[41] Unlike the closed system of the penal game, in which time itself is a mere puppet of the warden's creation, the *automaton* of the unconscious is constantly molded and modified by the ceaseless blows of the Real.

But again, Lacan's focus is on justifying the Freudian axiom of the timeless unconscious. In the second seminar, in which the material on Poe's "The Purloined Letter" and the cybernetic example derived from the even-and-odd game are first presented, Lacan draws a distinction between *mémoire* ("memory") and *remémoration* ("remembering").[42] *Mémoire* refers to the common psychological conception of memory: Simply put, memory is the ability of an organic mental apparatus to retain past experiences and information. Naturally, for Lacan the psychoanalyst, this definition leaves a lot to be desired. It heavily relies upon a conception of memory privileging two points of reference that are anathema to analytic theory—biology (memory is a result of the brain's functioning, and can be explained as an attribute of grey matter) and consciousness (memory is measured by the capacity for conscious recollection). Particularly due to the latter facet of *mémoire,* psychoanalysis cannot content itself with such a definition of memory. What about repressed memories, so called because they cannot be brought before consciousness by virtue of censorship and defense mechanisms? Also, as time passes, conscious memories fade. If memory is merely the capacity for conscious recollection, then analysis must admit the possibility that people sometimes simply forget things. Admitting this threatens the very basis of analytic interpretation, this being the theory of the unconscious as defined via the defensive occlusion of certain fragments of (past) experience.

The second seminar contains numerous anti-humanist motifs. The psychical subject is compared with such things as a photographic apparatus, a calculator, and a cybernetic, binary code.[43] Unlike *mémoire,* in which organic brain tissue accounts for the psychological storage of past materials, unconscious memory as *remémoration* is nothing more than the recall and repetition of signifying sequences dictated by the internal logic of the Symbolic chain in and of itself.[44] As with the logical time essay, the psychological "I" (the "I" of *mémoire,* the ego and its experiential reality) is a

secondary, overdetermined residue of the logical "I" (the "I" of *remémoration,* the subject of the unconscious). Although conscious recollection has no memory of the whys and whences of its symptoms, the unconscious chains of signifiers "remember in my place"—a remembering betrayed by slips of the tongue, failed actions, and so on. The Lacanian "insistence of the letter"[45] is precisely the effect in which the analytic a posteriori of unconscious rules resulting from the unfurling of signifying sequences results in the seemingly nonsensical symptoms of acting-out, repetition compulsion, obsessive trains of thought, and so on. What the ego forgets, the signifier remembers. Plato, with a well-known ambiguity due to his choice of words, condemns writing as a poisonous substance (*pharmakon*) fatal to memory.[46] Lacan retorts that the memory stung by this toxin is strictly that of the conscious ego—that is, Imaginary *mémoire.* The poisoning which results in symptoms afflicting the conscious sufferer is a consequence of the indestructibility of unconscious memory—Symbolic *remémoration.*

This move of situating the unconscious in the effects of *remémoration* further underscores Lacan's correction of the Freudian hypostatization of the unconscious as a constitutive concept. Referring to the above theory of the unconscious as a relation between the subject and the signifier, Lacan remarks:

> You will see why the relation of the subject to the signifier is the reference-point that I wished to place at the forefront of a general rectification of analytic theory, for it is as primary and constitutive in the establishment of analytic experience as it is primary and constitutive in the radical function of the unconscious.
>
> It is, no doubt, one of the effects of my teaching to limit the unconscious to what might be called its narrowest platform. But it is in relation to this point of division that I cannot err on the side of any substantification. (*SXI,* 138)

The Kantian overtures in this passage are undeniably audible. The "narrowest platform" to which Lacan seeks to "limit the unconscious" is the role of regulative idea. Although it serves to constitute the grounds of the possibility for "analytic experience," it is not a constitutive notion for Lacan since he wishes to avoid erring "on the side of any substantification." As Juan-David Nasio emphasizes, Lacan's signifying unconscious circumvents the kind of fruitless investigations embarked upon by those who treat the unconscious as an entity existing apart from the analytic field. The question crucial to analysis, as both a theory and a practice, is cer-

tainly not "Where is the unconscious?" ("beneath" consciousness, "outside" of the ego, and so on), but "How does the unconscious function?"[47]

The final aspect of the eleventh seminar pertinent to this project is Lacan's interconnected employment of two concepts—the "closure of the unconscious" and its "temporal pulsation." These two ideas establish an important link between the earlier deconstruction of Freud's implicit chronological hierarchy—in which the past undialectically shapes the present—and the reinterpretation of Lacanian theory underway here:

> You have rapid access here to the formulation, which I have placed in the forefront, of a movement of the subject that opens up only to close again in a certain temporal pulsation—a pulsation I regard as being more radical than the insertion in the signifier that no doubt motivates it, but is not primary to it at the level of essence, since I have been driven to speak of essence. (*SXI,* 125)

Further on, Lacan says, "I speak to you of the unconscious as of that which appears in the temporal pulsation" (*SXI,* 143). What about the timelessness of the unconscious, supposedly buttressed by various assertions presented in this same seminar? How can the unconscious be both ignorant of time and still be "that which appears in the temporal pulsation"? Is it just that the synchronic structures of the unconscious reveal themselves (appear) exclusively at certain privileged diachronic loci—with Lacan aiming to specify these loci vis-à-vis his concept of the *point de capiton* and his emphasis on the importance of properly "punctuating" analytic sessions? Although these questions hint at an easy way to resolve this apparent tension, Lacan's rejection of a depth psychological version of psychoanalysis—the unconscious is immanently inscribed within the field of consciousness—complicates any easy appeal to a distinction between the timeless unconscious in itself versus the temporal moments when this unconscious appears.

In an examination of the role of day-residues in the dream-text as presented in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* indestructible infantile wishes, despite their immunity to the ravages of time, are shown to be incapable of manifesting themselves without the opportune openings provided by recent mnemic traces falling into associational connection with older cathected elements. Day-residues are thus akin to what Lacan calls the "open sesame" of the unconscious.[48] Despite his intermittent reaffirmation of the timelessness of the Freudian unconscious, Lacan engages in a thorough problematization of the (a)temporality of this unconscious. He regards such phenomena as day-residues, screen memories, and hysterical traumas as emblematic of a "reversible time":

> One notices that it is the closing of the unconscious which provides the key to its space—namely the impropriety of trying to turn it into an inside.
>
> That closing also demonstrates the core of a reversible time, quite necessarily introduced if we are to grasp the efficiency of discourse; it is rather easily perceived in something I have been emphasizing for a long time: the retroactive effect of meaning in sentences, meaning requiring the last word of a sentence to be sealed [*se boucler*]. *Nachträglichkeit* (remember that I was the first to extract it from Freud's texts), *Nachträglichkeit* or deferred action [*après-coup*], by which trauma becomes involved in symptoms, reveals a temporal structure of a higher order. (Lacan 1995a, 267–268)

An interesting tension surfaces within the mid-sixties teachings of Lacan between the timeless synchronicity of the unconscious Other's signifying chains and the *après-coup* of "reversible time" immanent to these very same chains. Is the "higher order" revealed by the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* synchronic, diachronic, or something incapable of being readily submitted to this Saussurian-style either/or? Lacan doesn't say. However, the tension evident in this phase of Lacanian thought is crucial insofar as this project seeks to unveil, as intrinsic to the internal metapsychological structure of *Trieb,* a temporal conflict between "timelessness" and the modulations of the "temporal pulsation" touched upon by Lacan.

## §8 Topological Structure, Lost Time, and the Final Shape of the Lacanian System

Although an air of controversy overshadows virtually the entirety of Lacan's career, the last phase of his teaching is perhaps the most contentious. Even his followers frequently voice dissatisfaction with the prominence of topology, formalization, and mathematical models in the seminars of the 1970s. The previously difficult—but, nonetheless, understandable—reliance on structural linguistics is replaced by meditations on the properties of such topological figures as the torus, the cross-cap, and the Borromean knot (Roudinesco dates the first appearance of this knot as February 9, 1972, in the nineteenth seminar ". . . *Ou pire*").[49] However, even though Lacan's inordinate emphasis on topology appears at the end of his theoretical itinerary, its origins lie as far back as the 1940s. Understanding the genealogy responsible for engendering this later thematic shift is crucial in passing judgment on its relative conceptual worth.

One of the earliest explicit references to topology occurs in the 1958 text "The Signification of the Phallus." Linking the vocabularies of structuralism and mathematics, Lacan asserts that the play of signifiers specific to his own version of the Freudian unconscious prompts the coming-into-view of a certain mathematical topology:

> It is a question of rediscovering in the laws that govern that other scene (*ein andere Schauplatz*), which Freud, on the subject of dreams, designates as being that of the unconscious, the effects that are discovered at the level of the chain of materially unstable elements that constitutes language: effects determined by the double play of combination and substitution in the signifier, according to the two aspects that generate the signified, metonymy and metaphor; determining effects for the institution of the subject. From this test, a topology, in the mathematical sense of the term, appears . . . (Lacan 1977h, 285)

Lacan refers to the model of the unconscious derived from the recourse to cybernetics and its binary chains from the second seminar ("the laws that govern the other scene," "the level of the chain of materially unstable elements," and so on). What he hints at, without going into sufficient detail, is that a psychoanalytic employment of mathematical topology would involve mapping the structural genesis of the analytic a posteriori laws of the unconscious. Hence, topology would be the visual representation of the bidirectional temporality—the interactive tension between synchrony and diachrony, between the fixed past and the changing present—endemic to psychical signifiers. Topology would thus disclose "trajectories," namely, patterned courses of unconscious structure as it changes over time.

The ninth seminar of 1961 to 1962 is arguably the first "topological seminar." Bertrand Russell, Venn diagrams, the torus, and the cross-cap all feature prominently in the sessions of this academic year. Therein, Lacan establishes a direct connection between logical time and topology:

> This temporal dimension of the functioning of the signifying chain which I at first articulated as succession, has as a consequence that the scansion introduces an additional element than the division of the modulatory interruption: it introduces haste which I inserted qua haste in logic. It is an old work: '*Le temps logique.*'
>
> The step that I am trying to get you to take has already begun to be traced, it is the one in which discontinuity is bound to what is the essence of the signifier, namely difference. If that on which we have made pivot, have ceaselessly brought back this function of the signifier, is to draw your attention to the fact that, even by repeating the same, the

> same by being repeated is inscribed as distinct. Where is the interpolation of a difference? Does it reside only in the cut—it is here that the introduction of the topological dimension beyond the temporal scansion interests us—or in something else which we will call the simple possibility of being different, the existence of the differential battery which constitutes the signifier and through which we cannot confuse synchrony with simultaneity at the root of the phenomenon, synchrony which makes the same reappear? (*SIX,* 5/16/62)

Is Lacan implying that a mathematical topology of the type mentioned in 1958 also applies to the 1946 prisoners' game? If so, what happens to the proclamations in that earlier essay about challenging the spatio-synchronic bias of traditional logic? If the unfolding of the game can be spatially mapped, then isn't it what Bergson would call a specious, false "spatialized time"?[50] In the quotation above, Lacan admits as much. With no ambiguity, he states that, "the topological dimension beyond the temporal scansion interests us." What's more, "we cannot confuse synchrony with simultaneity" because, as shown in the logical time essay, the atemporal synchrony of the big Other exhibits itself precisely through the diachronic choreography of the actors dominated by its preexistent presence. The synchronic symbolic order is not "simultaneous"; it does not reveal itself at a single glance, in the instant of the glance. And yet, this Other is, as shown in such places as the eleventh seminar, nothing other than the timeless unconscious. This atemporal "other scene" only happens to be incidentally condemned to revealing itself in the nonsimultaneous sequence of chronological diachrony.[51]

In 1964, Lacan is directly questioned about this new line of research. François Wahl asks, "*Is topology for you a method of discovery or of exposition?*" Lacan replies, "It is the mapping of the topology proper to our experience as analysts, which may be taken in a metaphysical perspective" (*SXI,* 90). This answer is incredibly vague, and fails to shed any light on the heart of the query. What is "a metaphysical perspective"? If Lacan refers to a precritical metaphysics—prior to Kant's distinction between constitutive and regulative uses of human reason—then topology is in danger of becoming a reified representation of an unconscious existing in and of itself. This kind of metaphysical topology would pretend to offer a faithful modeling of "the real unconscious." The result would be propositions of the sort, "The unconscious actually is a torus," "The subject really is a rim around a hole," and so on. This seems quite absurd. Also, it merits mentioning that Freud, regarding a similar topic, warns against any attempt at mapping the psyche onto physical space.[52] Topographical models and metaphors are merely one of several descriptive strategies for systematically delineating the psyche.

The more likely implication of Lacan's answer to Wahl is that topology is yet another tool in the service of the analyst's struggle to apprehend the unconscious. Topology assists in gaining a snapshot overview of an interrelated series of elements constituting the significant turning points of a patient's analysis. Subsequently in the eleventh seminar, Lacan moves in this direction—"treating it topologically . . . responds to all the needs of its handling" (*SXI,* 164). Topology is a regulative idea governing analytic praxis—namely, a means of "handling" the unconscious.

Things do not remain so clear-cut. By 1973, mathematical formalization becomes more than just a descriptive device for a handy regulative ordering of psychoanalytic phenomena. Instead, such models are the very goal of analytic theory: "Mathematical formalization is our goal, our ideal. Why? Because it alone is matheme, in other words, it alone is capable of being integrally transmitted" (*SXX,* 119). Part of Lacan's justification for formalizing analytic discourse lies in concerns over concrete aspects of therapy and technique—the training of analysts, the handling of the transference, and the conception of the cure. These overlaps between topology, treatment, and the critique of ego psychology—the "transmissibility" of the mathemes is a positive extension of the ramifications of this critique[53]—are issues that must be put aside for now. Nonetheless, although Lacan offers clinical rationalizations for the mathematization of his own teaching, this later phase draws the greatest amount of criticism.

Multiple commentators insist that Lacan's stress on the "mathemes"—the minimal formal "language" of graphs, abbreviations, and drawings—results in a decreasing degree of analytic relevance and basic comprehensibility as regards his teachings. According to Catherine Clément, "Lacan invented none of this limpid mathematical logic. Its use merely complicated the exposition of his ideas" (Clément 1983, 162). Roudinesco insinuates a parallel between Lacan's growing senility and the intensification of his obsession with mathematics.[54] François Roustang observes that Lacanian mathemes aren't mathematical; they cannot behave as functional equations, since nothing results from plugging specific pieces of empirical data into them.[55] Roustang accuses Lacan of a "sheer misappropriation of mathematics." He views these Lacanian notations as empty, decorative scribbling.

Some authors remain ambivalent about Lacan's mathematics. Marcelle Marini, referring to Lacan's above-cited 1964 response to Wahl, notes that Lacan leaves the questionable status of topology undecided (that is, whether it is a constitutive aspect of psychoanalytic "metaphysics" or a regulative, pedagogical device).[56] Similarly, Sherry Turkle summarizes the problem as, "whether Lacan's idea of the matheme is to be interpreted literally or metaphorically" (Turkle 1978, 182). Turkle maintains

that Lacan's mathematics is, in one sense, "too sustained on a technical level to be dismissed as 'pure metaphor,'" and in another sense, "it is not delineated enough to be a model."[57] Lacan is almost completely silent when it comes to providing solutions to this dilemma. At the end of his teaching, in the twenty-sixth seminar of 1978 to 1979, Lacan vaguely alludes to a potentially more developed reply on his part (a reply cut short by his death in 1981). Referring to the Borromean knot, Lacan says that this knot would be "an abuse of metaphor."[58] Even though this knot figures as a prominent part of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, the aging Lacan declares that this topological entity is itself "a mathematical question, and it is *mathematically* that I intend to handle it."[59] These remarks succeed only in soliciting further questions. Should one abandon analytic inquiries in favor of mathematical ones? Or, is psychoanalysis merely mathematics pursued by other means? Overall, insofar as the mathemes are used in the transmission of psychoanalysis as a body of "scientific" knowledge, the extent of their correspondence to the behavior of numbers isn't so important. Lacan resorts to mathematics as the Greek *ta mathemata*—that which is capable of being taught and learned.[60]

The twenty-sixth seminar, entitled *Topology and Time,* calls for careful scrutiny in the context of the present discussion. Unfortunately, the amount of information to be gleaned from this text is minimal. By this point, Lacan is noticeably exhausted, his age and physical condition having impaired his ability to carry on the seminar. Describing this final chapter of the Lacanian odyssey, Marini declares it practically unpublishable by virtue of "Lacan's immense weariness, his absences, his silences."[61] Additionally, Marini contends that, "the title . . . shows clearly—in a philosophical form—the stumbling block (or the end point) of his passionate theorizing" (Marini 1992, 247–248). Why are "topology and time" a philosophical "stumbling block" for Lacan?

Lacan's final seminar provides only the most fleeting of indications as to the problems concerning him during this last stage. In the opening two sentences of the first session of that year, Lacan states: "There is a correspondence between topology and practice. This correspondence consists in time. Topology resists—it is in this that the correspondence exists" (*SXXVI,* 11/21/78). Does Lacan mean to say that topology "resists" time? Although unclear in these sentences, the second seminar offers a clue to the nature of this (non)relation. In reference to Freud, Lacan contrasts the spaciostructural dimension of the psychical topography with the temporal dimension of such phenomena as regression:

> [Freud] introduces regression from the moment when he emphasizes the temporal factors. As a result, he is also forced to admit it into the

> topographical, that is to say spatial plane, where its appearance is none too steady. It remains paradoxical, and to a certain extent antinomic and inexplicable. (*SII,* 145)

Considering that the origins of topological discourse in Lacan's work date from the 1958 connection drawn between Saussurian signifiers and unconscious laws, inferring a conflict between topology and time as an invariable constant of Lacanian theory is unproblematic.[62] Lacan reinforces this inference by equivocating between his notion of structure—the symbolic order, the big Other, and so on—and the function of topology:

> There is, nonetheless, a gap between psychoanalysis and topology. What I endeavor to do is to fill in this gap. Topology is exemplary—it permits in practice making a certain number of metaphors. There is an equivalence between structure and topology. (*SXXVI,* 11/21/78)

In this same seminar, Lacan speaks of the "abuse of metaphor," and yet he praises as "exemplary" the ability to forge psychoanalytic metaphors on the basis of topology. He endeavors to "fill in" the "gap between psychoanalysis and topology." Cutting through the Gordian knot of inconsistencies and ambiguities woven by this seminar, one can view Lacan's topology as a last effort to conceptualize the relationship (or lack thereof) between temporality and the unconscious, an effort isolated by this project as a consistent thread running from the 1938 article on the "family complexes" all the way to this seminar of 1978 to 1979, thus contesting the standard perspective wherein Lacan's work is segmented into completely distinct early, middle, and late periods.

In a study of Lacanian "mathematics," Nathalie Charraud argues that Lacan's formalization of his theory is a countermeasure taken against the former "pilot science" of the earlier 1950s structuralist period—namely, linguistics. Whereas linguists supposedly focus on the diachrony of the signifying chain, the Symbolic unconscious, although "structured like a language," is exempt from time/temporality:

> The unconscious is structured like a language, but, Lacan has said, it isn't language. The essential difference between the unconscious and language seems . . . to reside in temporality: the grounding principle of linguistics is the linearity of the signifying chain, which Lacan calls diachrony—to which is precisely opposed the synchrony of unconscious knowledge. For the linguist, the phenomena of language unfold themselves in time, according to the rules of syntax and of grammar that per-

> mit the concatenation of signifiers. By contrast, the knowledge of the unconscious is present outside of temporality, which explains in particular the indestructibility of desire. This knowledge is able to unfold itself in the signifying chain at the time of the interpretation of a dream or the recourse to free association, but its own structure is not linear. (Charraud 1997, 60)

Charraud's position leans upon Lacan's earlier distinction between synchrony and simultaneity (from the ninth seminar): The unconscious, despite the fact that it reveals itself only at decisive moments in either the linear flow of free associations or the chronological progression of the individual's life history, is nonetheless "*hors temporalité.*" The diachrony of language is always–already dominated by the "indestructible desire" of the unconscious. Thus, Charraud brings Lacan's topology strictly in line with the axioms of an orthodox Freudianism.

Alain Cochet, in a study similar to Charraud's, presents a different view of Lacanian topology. Cochet describes topology as corresponding to the temporality of the signifying chain:

> Topology . . . isn't an application of psychoanalysis. It's simply homogenous with psychoanalysis. In fact, the manipulation of topological objects permits having access to a very particular logic that finds itself in rapport with the temporality proper to signifying enchainment, as well as with the mode of relation to the object-cause-of-desire. (Cochet 1998, 204)

The temporality of the signifier is a bidirectional temporality, involving a constant, oscillating tension between, on the one hand, the insistence of the past, and, on the other hand, the *après-coup* of unconscious truth conceived in an analytic a posteriori mode. Hence, topology is a visual mapping of the movement wherein the laws governing the diachronous unfolding of unconscious signifying chains are formed.

Žižek concurs with Cochet, not Charraud (nevertheless, one should keep in mind that Charraud's reading has plenty of support in Lacan's own remarks). Instead of arguing that Lacanian topology buttresses Freud's assertions about a timeless unconscious, Žižek speaks of topological models as imaging the "temporal loop" of the symptom-as-signifier:

> The paradox of trauma *qua* cause that does not pre-exist its effects but is itself retroactively 'posited' by them involves a kind of temporal loop: *it is through its 'repetition,' through its echoes within the signifying structure, that the cause retroactively becomes what it always-already was.* (Žižek 1994, 32)

Žižek continues:

> This is what Lacan has in mind when he speaks of the signifier's *synchrony* as opposed to simple atemporal simultaneity: synchrony designates such a paradoxical synchronization, coincidence, of present and past—that is, such a temporal loop where, by progressing forward, we return to where we always-already were. Herein resides the sense of Lacan's obsession with topological models of 'curved' space in the 1960s and 1970s (Moebius band, Klein's bottle, inner eight, etc.): what all these models have in common is the fact that they cannot be seized 'at a glance,' 'in one view'—they all involve a kind of logical temporality—that is, we must first let ourselves be caught in a trap, become the victim of an optical illusion, in order to reach the turning point at which, all of a sudden, the entire perspective shifts and we discover that we are already 'on the other side,' on another surface. (Žižek 1994, 32)

Žižek explicitly brings into a single perspective the multiple thematics traced throughout this chapter—logical time (the early Lacan of the 1940s), the synchrony of the signifier (the middle Lacan of the 1950s), and topology (the late Lacan of the 1960s and 1970s). For Žižek, the traumatic past, although spoken of by analytic discourse in a suggestive manner as "repressed," doesn't have any substantial existence outside of the immanence of the present in which it achieves actualization. For example, in hysterical traumas, the first event doesn't lie dormant in the preconscious, waiting like a time bomb to pathologically detonate. The first memory exists as the memory that it "actually" is exclusively in the moment at which it coincides with the second event-experience in which a trauma per se is registered. (Using a popular culture reference, Žižek speaks of the analytic symptom as going "back to the future.")[63] In Žižek's view, Lacanian synchronicity is precisely this coincidence of past and present: The past does not even "ex-sist" until it's caught in the looping, curved space of the signifier's straddling of otherwise disparate temporal orders. As Žižek puts it elsewhere, "there is no repression previous to the return of the repressed" (Žižek 1992a, 14).

One of Lacan's remarks in the ninth seminar (the earliest "topological" seminar) supports the Žižekian interpretation of topology. He states:

> This would be a notation that nobody in topology has ever dreamt of and which would have something quite artificial about it because it is hard to see why a torus should in any way be an object which might have a temporal dimension. (*SIX,* 4/11/62)

An indication is given to the effect that topological objects, at least as employed with reference to psychoanalytic metapsychology, lend an image to a movement or dynamic—that is, "a temporal dimension." Thus, the quest inaugurated in 1946 for a genetic logic continues through the seminars of the 1970s, these being dominated by discussions of mathemes and topology. But, as evident in his final seminar on topology and time, Lacan puts back into question whether or not topology should be situated in a synchronic, atemporal register or a diachronic, temporal one.

Another important facet of Lacan's topological objects is their refiguring of the Freudian unconscious. With the Moebius band, Lacan dismisses the vulgar understanding of the unconscious as a container hidden behind the field of consciousness. This special type of band is constructed from a single surface. This surface, bent in a particular manner, enables one to move continually along the "same" surface without ever having to depart from this unidirectional path. But, after a certain amount of time in movement, one finds oneself on the opposite side from which one departed. For Lacan, consciousness and the unconscious are like the two sides on the same surface of the Moebius band. Consequently, this topological object embodies the claim that the Freudian unconscious must be read as a regulative maxim providing unity to the phenomenally unsynthesized data of given consciousness.[64] Without the presupposition of the unconscious, one is confronted with several separate sides. These sides remain nonsensically incompatible with each other until one locates the essential turning points—the corners of the Moebius band—that transform the incommensurable sides into a paradoxically unified surface-object. In terms of temporality, these turning points are none other than registrations of the *tuché* of traumatic Real time. The unconscious is the resulting coherence of the multiple dimensions of the conscious order achieved through following how the symbolicopsychical *automaton* is bent by the impacts of the Real.

Two difficulties plague Žižek's elegant reinterpretation of Lacanian topology. The first issue is the suspicious equivocation between synchrony and temporality. In the 1946 essay, Lacan tries to portray his three "logical times" as upsetting the hegemony of classical, spatio-synchronic logic. As seen, this effort falls under the sway of an illusion of perspective—perhaps the same kind of illusion that Žižek refers to regarding certain topological objects. The logic of the prisoners' dilemma is temporal only if one doesn't perceive it from the perspectives either of the prison warden (the big Other determining the preestablished rules of the game) or of the prisoner who finally understands the significance of the others' hesitations (that is, the subject once she/he grasps the functioning of the Sym-

bolic matrix within which she/he is caught and defined). Similarly, a topological object is actually given all at once (*d'un seul coup*). It just doesn't seem so by virtue of the limited perspectival position of the observer. Additionally, any topologist can provide mathematical formulas for generating the spatial representations of such objects as the Moebius band, the Klein bottle, and the torus. These imagistic/Imaginary constructs—Lacan identifies them as such[65]—are the superficial presentations of Symbolic/mathematical formulas that are, ultimately, available in the "instant of the glance." Their "temporal" character is, once again, simply an optical illusion.

Lacan's articulations authorize two distinct interpretations of topology's relationship to time/temporality. Nathalie Charraud's reading claims that topology is the appropriate spatio-synchronic mapping of a timeless set of unconscious laws governing the diachrony of specific signifying chains. Alain Cochet and Slavoj Žižek insist that topology visually represents the temporality of this same unconscious. And yet, the latter approach is not actually different from the former. One can propose that the later Lacan is concerned with developing a psychoanalytic theory of temporality strictly through misrecognizing that Lacan "temporalizes" synchronic logic only to better subjugate diachrony to synchrony.

In the opening session of the twenty-second seminar, Lacan informs his audience that the topologically exemplary Borromean knot is, as a whole, to be situated in the register of the Imaginary.[66] In 1946, the Imaginary is equated with the instant of the glance. In 1974, the topological object qua Borromean knot is, despite representing the conjunction of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary, an Imaginary construct. Does this knot therefore permit the same kind of instantaneous apprehension as experienced by the prisoner who sees two black discs on his/her counterparts? Isn't it admittedly yet another spatio-synchronic reduction of the unconscious? Perhaps the Moebius band is helpful here: Two sides, one from the 1940s and the other from the 1970s, form the surface of the "same" Lacan—the Lacan who is remarkably consistent in his marginalization of temporality. The key to any viable Lacanian theory of the temporalized unconscious, a theory able to overcome the problems plaguing Lacan in the logical time essay as well as in his final annual seminar, resides in the 1964 *tuché–automaton* model: The Symbolic unconscious is necessarily ignorant of time (as Real), but this ignorance is not without its repercussions for this same unconscious—time itself becomes an invisible sculptor (a *tuché*) of those signifying chains (the *automaton*) in which the being of the *parlêtre* is tightly entangled. The unconscious is indirectly, rather than directly, temporal.

But what if one grants that Lacan does indeed succeed in sketching

the rudiments of a psychoanalytic temporality via his topology? The unavoidable question still remains regarding how Freud's timeless unconscious and Lacan's "temporal logic" of the unconscious can or should be reconciled with each other. Even as late as a 1980 conference at Caracas, in which he bids farewell to his followers, Lacan asserts his profound allegiance to Freud: "It's up to you to be Lacanians. Me, I am a Freudian" (*SXXVII,* 7/12/80). If this statement is to be taken at anything close to face value, then from where does the license come to temporalize that which Freud left languishing in ignorance of time? Freud, with his emphasis on the powerful influence of the past upon the present, and Lacan, with his emphasis on the vacillating, dialectical dynamic between past, present, and future (*à la* the *après-coup* and the future anterior)—each holds one half of the solution to this apparent impasse. Understanding the antagonistic collision of timelessness and temporality—this aporetic confrontation centers on the metapsychological structure of *Trieb*—is the sole means of adequately reconciling this interrupted, insufficiently thematized exchange between the two giants of psychoanalysis's past.

3

# Psychoanalysis and Modern Rationalism

## §9 Freud's Philosophical Ambivalence

When speaking of Freud, philosophers are often fond of mentioning the story about his hidden stash of books by Nietzsche. Freud, who generally avoids mentioning philosophers and consistently distances himself from what he takes to be a field of undisciplined speculation, supposedly draws upon Nietzsche as a significant yet disavowed source of inspiration. As certain embellishments upon the perhaps apocryphal tale have it, Freud's volumes of Nietzsche are heavily underlined, testifying to a secret collusion between the founding father of psychoanalysis and the philosophical murderer of God. The implication many philosophers prefer to draw out is that this story signals the conceptual precedence of philosophy over analytic theory, even within the very core of analysis itself.[1]

Freud's ambivalence about philosophy indeed entails an "anxiety of influence." Such figures as Empedocles, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer anticipate a variety of psychoanalytic developments. Even apart from examining specific authors in the history of philosophy, one must take into account the fact that the problems dealt with by psychoanalysis were previously the domain of philosophers. The field of "psychology"—especially Freudian metapsychology, which seeks the timeless laws of human cognition underlying the empirical variations encountered through particular cases of observation—pursues the same kind of questions as those asked by Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, among others.[2] Freud doesn't directly employ terms like "*Cogito,*" "subject," or "self-consciousness" (although Lacan reintroduces this philosophical vocabulary into analytic theory, arguing for its latency within Freud's thought). Nevertheless, the Freudian cleaving of the psychical apparatus into conflicting components carries far-reaching consequences for any future "metaphysics of the subject."

Occasionally, Freud lets his guard down and allows himself to wax speculative. In two of the key texts of the second topography, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud repeatedly warns his readers that he isn't basing his new drive theory on observational data. In a fashion somewhat distinct from the case studies and technical papers, Freud leaves to the side the search for empirical foundations and seeks answers to his questions in biological metanarratives and a mythology of forces—the organism's need to return to the inorganic state, the cosmic clash between *Eros* and the *Todestrieb,* and so on. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud writes:

> It is of no concern to us in this connection to enquire how far, with this hypothesis of the pleasure principle, we have approached or adopted any particular, historically established, philosophical system. We have arrived at these speculative assumptions in an attempt to describe and to account for the facts of daily observation in our field of study. Priority and originality are not among the aims that psycho-analytic work sets itself . . . (*SE* 18: 7)

Freud begins by downplaying the issue of philosophical influences in analytic theory. He assumes a stance of supposed indifference to prior speculative systems—but, this indifference never prompts him to deny outright the possibility of philosophical concepts being predecessors of analytic insights. Furthermore, Freud does not actually say that such hypotheses as the pleasure principle are simply products of scientific–inductive investigation, especially since "speculative assumptions"—the unconscious, repression, drives, and so on—assist in rendering the observed phenomena of analytic practice intelligible.

In the opening of *The Ego and the Id,* Freud describes the topographical division of the psyche as a "fundamental premiss of psycho-analysis." The explicitly Kantian justifications of this "premiss," as previously presented in the 1915 essay "The Unconscious," are repeated yet again:

> The division of the psychical into what is conscious and what is unconscious is the fundamental premiss of psycho-analysis; and it alone makes it possible for psycho-analysis to understand the pathological processes in mental life, which are as common as they are important, and to find a place for them in the framework of science. To put it once more, in a different way: psycho-analysis cannot situate the essence of the psychical in consciousness, but is obliged to regard consciousness as a quality of the psychical, which may be present in addition to other qualities or may be absent. (*SE* 19: 13)

The assumption, made before any practical application of analytic principles, of a distinction between the conscious and the unconscious "alone makes it possible for psycho-analysis" to interpret symptoms. The otherwise marginal and insignificant slips and mistakes of an individual remain nothing more than mere accidents until repressed desires are assigned a determinative role capable of lending meaning to myriad details of the subject's existence.

Later on in *The Ego and the Id,* when explicating his recently revised theory of the drives, Freud admits that this new theory is not on the same level as theories supported by empirical data gathered through observational procedures. Although Freud awaits psychoanalysis finding a place in "the framework of science"—this longing for a scientific status on par with the natural sciences finds frequent expression in Freud's writings[3]—many of its irreplaceable axioms are far from being supported by empirical data alone. Speaking of the central notion of psychical drive-energy, Freud says, "I am only putting forward a hypothesis; I have no proof to offer" (*SE* 19: 44). What kind of scientist would dare to expose himself/herself to the public without any support in concrete observations? Why does Freud lack proof? Hasn't he seen this "energy" at work in his numerous analysands?

No matter how many individual case studies are accumulated, Freud remains plagued by what seems to be a sort of vicious circle—a vicious circle thwarting an easy transformation of psychoanalysis into one of the natural sciences: The evidence supporting the theory of the unconscious comes into view exclusively following the foundational gesture of theoretically presupposing, without any prior, underlying guarantee, the concrete efficacy of this very same unconscious. Psychoanalysis as such, in its origins, emerges through an epistemological gamble, an ungrounded speculative bet prompted by more than just what offers itself to naïve and direct inspection of visible "facts." For example, the reason Freud treats Dora's cough as symptomatic of a repressed sexual conflict is that he already assumes the existence of such a conflict lurking behind the immediately available evidence. If Freud did not suspect the collusion of unconscious desires with the ailments of Dora's body, he would have sent her to a regular medical doctor instead (perhaps a nose and throat specialist like Wilhelm Fliess). Her cough would be nothing more than a somatic disorder, albeit a disorder whose causes medical knowledge, for some strange reason, has trouble locating. In reference to the psychical topography, Freud states, "Such ideas as these are part of a speculative superstructure of psycho-analysis" (*SE* 20: 32). Within the frame of this superstructure, a whole gamut of meaningless, trivial, and disparate phenomena become part of a significant, intricate tapestry. The work of weaving this

fabric, a work engaged in by the interpreting analyst, is justified in advance by the certainty that the unconscious always exerts its influence. This certainty enables the analyst to perform his/her labors by holding out the promise of a coherence yet-to-come, waiting to be revealed and resolved through the lens of psychoanalytic reason.

## §10 Lacan and Cartesian Analysis

This dimension of Freud prompts Lacan to downplay Freud's scientific ambitions. Lacan takes seriously Freud's proposal that metapsychology can and should replace metaphysics.[4] In drawing comparisons between Freud and his philosophical forerunners, he makes an incredibly bold claim: The Cartesian subject is the necessary historical precursor of psychoanalysis. Without the *Cogito,* Freudian theory would not and could not have arisen.[5] Instead of attempting to reconcile analysis with its scientific critics—many authors enamored of the mathematized natural sciences point to Freud's "shortcomings" as a scientist (and, in so doing, they fail to distinguish between, on the one hand, Freud's ardent desire for scientific prestige, and, on the other, the actual substance of analytic theory and practice)—Lacan allies psychoanalysis with philosophy. He even goes one step further: Not only is psychoanalysis closer to metaphysics than to science, but, what's more, the metaphysical subject addressed by metapsychological theory is the "subject of science." Lacan thus demands that the natural sciences acknowledge historical debts similar to Freud's. What motivates these rather extreme claims? Is Lacan's strategy in resituating psychoanalysis on new foundations actually based on genuinely Freudian thought?

Lacan's Cartesian reading of Freud develops primarily over the course of four seminars—the ninth (*Identification,* 1961–1962), the eleventh (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis,* 1964), the thirteenth (*The Object of Psychoanalysis,* 1965–1966), and the fourteenth (*The Logic of Fantasy,* 1966–1967). The ninth and fourteenth seminars transpose the *Cogito* onto the Lacanian theories of the split subject of enunciation and utterance, the function of the signifier, the big Other, and the distinction between the id and the unconscious (for now, an interpretation of this angle of Lacan's recourse to Descartes must be postponed). The interpretations of the psychoanalytic *Cogito* from the eleventh and thirteenth seminars are the most useful ones at this juncture; each of these seminars presents a separate strategy in the analytic appropriation of Descartes. In the eleventh seminar, Freudian technique (analytic practice) is deemed Cartesian. In the thir-

teenth seminar, psychoanalytic metapsychology (analytic theory) is, as Lacan has it, underpinned by the Cartesian "subject of science."

In 1964, Lacan identifies Freud's method as Cartesian in nature. Unlike a scientist or medical doctor who endeavors to stay as close as possible to the immediate givens of empirical data, Freud takes absolutely nothing offered to him by the patient at face value:

> Freud's method is Cartesian—in the sense that he sets out from the basis of the subject of certainty. The question is—of what can one be certain? With this aim, the first thing to be done is to overcome that which connotes anything to do with the content of the unconscious—especially when it is a question of extracting it from the experience of the dream—to overcome that which floats everywhere, that which marks, stains, spots, the text of any dream communication—*I am not sure, I doubt.* (*SXI,* 35)

The most important thing to note is that Freud's method—the technique of analytic interpretation—is what Lacan labels Cartesian. That is, Lacan doesn't, at least at this point, claim that the Freudian subject literally "is" the *Cogito.* (This reading is advanced by, most notably, Žižek and other members of the Slovenian school of Lacanian theory.) According to Lacan, Freud, in listening to his patients, carefully avoids relying upon any particular contents in the course of interpretation. For example, in analyzing dreams, the manifest text—the recountable materials of the dream remaining accessible to consciousness—is always susceptible to a kind of skepticism in search of the latent text. And, in those moments when the patient expresses doubts, hesitations, and uncertainties in his/her associations, the analyst is certain that the repressed kernels being sought are nearby.

Now, what is "the subject of certainty" mentioned by Lacan? What is this subjectivity that is, evidently, the starting point for the analyst's deployment of his/her technique? Taking the unconscious as a sort of axiomatic regulative maxim, the analyst is convinced that the unconscious always succeeds in manifesting itself within the field of consciousness. More specifically, the analyst is certain that the unconscious will express itself in the verbal associations of the analysand. Lacan refers to this analytic conviction with the phrase "*ça parle*"[6] (it/id speaks—*ça* means both "it" and "id" in French):

> I know the false modesty that is current in science on this subject; it is a fit companion for the false thought of pedantry, when it argues the ineffable nature of lived experience, even of the 'morbid consciousness,'

> in order to disarm the effort that it expends, namely, that required at precisely the point at which it is not ineffable since it (*ça*) speaks, at which lived experience, far from separating, communicates itself, at which subjectivity yields up its true structure, the structure in which what is analysed is identical with what is articulated. (Lacan 1977g, 216)

In every conscious intention, the it/id immanent to this same intentional surface—what Lacan calls "lived experience"—registers its presence. As Freud puts it, even when the ego lies and deceives in the service of repression, the truth of repressed desire oozes from every pore; the body "speaks" unconscious truth, even when the conscious speaker refuses its verbalization. What makes the interpretation of symptoms possible is this presupposed certainty that the unconscious, instead of being irrevocably eclipsed by the ego, is always–already an inherent part of the accessible realm of experience.[7] As both advocates and critics of psychoanalysis frequently have it, the unconscious is allegedly an ungraspable entity hidden behind consciousness. In returning to an examination of what makes the Freudian field possible, Lacan refuses this perspective, abandoning the simplicity of depth psychological imagery in favor of a more rigorous conception of the psyche's *topos*.

As early as 1946, in "*Propos sur la causalité psychique,*" Lacan remarks that, "it would not be superfluous to call for a return to Descartes" (Lacan 1966b, 163). Subsequently, in "Position of the Unconscious," which dates from the same period as the eleventh seminar (although originally given by Lacan at the 1960 Bonneval colloquium, the version published in the 1966 *Écrits* was rewritten in 1964), Lacan is quite specific about the status of his recourse to Descartes, of the return that he both calls for and carries out himself. He states, "The subject, the Cartesian subject, is the presupposition of the unconscious" (Lacan 1995a, 268). Lacan does not say that the Cartesian subject literally "is" the unconscious (or, the subject of the unconscious), but that this subject is a "presupposition." As presupposed, the Lacanian *Cogito* is less a constitutive concept in a metaphysical exposition of psychoanalytic subjectivity than a regulative principle qua *ça parle*. In other words, the subjectivity of which psychoanalysis is certain is the subject that expresses itself in the gaps and lacunas of consciousness. This assumed subject is the vanishing point towards which interpretation progresses and, in this trajectory, by which interpretation unifies the disparate materials proffered by the analysand.[8] As to the ontological status of the Freudian *Cogito,* Lacan warns that it must be conceived of as "pre-ontological." (Similarly, in the third seminar, he insists that, "there is no question . . . of my doing the metaphysics of the Freudian discovery and drawing out its consequences for what may be called being.")[9]

However, even in his explicit avoidance of the Freudian fallacy of hypostatizing the unconscious, Lacan appears to slide from the *Cogito* being an initial assumption in the practice of analysis to the Cartesian subject being equivalent to the essential structure of the unconscious in and of itself per se. Lacan justifies his use of Descartes as part of an effort to "desubstantify" the unconscious. Since the unconscious is neither thing nor substance, the "empty spot" of the nonextended *Cogito* is the most appropriate characterization of the subject of the unconscious. And yet, because of this appropriateness, Lacan claims that his version of the subject actually is the *Cogito* as such:

> [I]n the term *subject* . . . I am not designating the living substratum needed by this phenomenon of the subject, nor any sort of substance, nor any being possessing knowledge in his *pathos,* his suffering, whether primal or secondary, nor even some incarnated logos, but the Cartesian subject, who appears at the moment when doubt is recognized as certainty—except that, through my approach, the bases of this subject prove to be wider, but, at the same time much more amenable to the certainty that eludes it. This is what the unconscious is. (*SXI,* 126)

"This is what the unconscious is."—But, if the unconscious is not a substance defined in the framework of an ontology or a metaphysics, should one speak of it as existent? "Is" the unconscious, as the Cartesian *Cogito,* constitutive or regulative? Lacan sometimes fails to show adequate care in avoiding the problems that Freud gets into by claiming to definitively prove the "existence" of the unconscious in view of the intelligibility it lends to conscious phenomena. Although Lacan's cautions about substantification serve as a mitigating factor regarding this risk of hypostatization, his language nonetheless veers in the direction of transforming the subject of the unconscious into something more than a methodological presupposition.

Even though, in the eleventh seminar, Lacan plants the seeds for a transition from a Cartesian methodology (analytic practice as informed by the presupposition of the *ça parle*) to a Cartesian metaphysics (the subject of the unconscious as literally being the *Cogito*), this seminar's emphasis is decidedly on the link between Freud and Descartes at the level of technique. In fact, it isn't so much the *Cogito* as an outcome/result of the Cartesian system that interests Lacan as the method of radical skepticism through which this subject is derived:

> There are thoughts in this field of the beyond of consciousness, and it is impossible to represent these thoughts other than in the same homology

> of determination in which the subject of the *I think* finds himself in relation to the articulation of the *I doubt.*
>
> Descartes apprehends his *I think* in the enunciation of the *I doubt,* not in its statement, which still bears all of this knowledge to be put in doubt. Shall I say that Freud makes one more step—which designates for us sufficiently the legitimacy of our association—when he invites us to integrate in the text of the dream what I shall call the *colophon of doubt*—the colophon, in an old text, is that small pointing hand that used to be printed, in the days when we still had a typography, in the margin. The colophon of doubt is part of the text . . . That is why I compare it to the Cartesian method. (*SXI,* 44)

In showing how Freud denies his analysands any recourse to a "metalanguage"—in which they could utter comments or asides bearing upon their own associational materials that were exempt from being interpreted as part of the same chain of associations—Lacan establishes an analogy between certain utterances and the "colophon of doubt." Since analysts treat statements of doubt or uncertainty as especially indicative of the defensive activities surrounding the speaking unconscious, these statements are, as Lacan says, "part of the text." And, the part that they play is to "point" to occluded psychical materials participating in the formation of symptoms. Lacan twists the Cartesian "I doubt, therefore I am" into "I am only insofar as I doubt."[10] The dubious gaps in consciousness, provoking hesitations and uncertainties, signal with certainty the effects of the eclipsed *sujet.*

Another interpretive thread stemming from Descartes, which eventually leads to the reading of the *Cogito* from the thirteenth seminar, runs through the sessions of the eleventh seminar. The Cartesian subject is more than just the presupposed vanishing point of analytic interpretation: The *Cogito* is the historical discovery that conditions the very possibility of psychoanalysis having emerged as a discipline. In Lacan's view, without Descartes there would never have been Freud—"I dare to state as a truth that the Freudian field was possible only a certain time after the emergence of the Cartesian subject, in so far as modern science began only after Descartes made his inaugural step" (*SXI,* 47). Lacan continues—"In order to understand the Freudian concepts, one must set out on the basis that it is the subject who is called—the subject of Cartesian origin" (*SXI,* 47). An indirect but clear connection is established between psychoanalysis and science, with Descartes being the mediator between these two fields. However, the earlier employment of the *Cogito* as the regulative *ça parle* of the interpretable unconscious doesn't seem to support a comparison between psychoanalysis and science. The natural, observational sciences pride themselves on the establishment of their truths

through the empirical testing of all propositions. Relying solely on the scientific method, these disciplines pretend not to take anything for granted, not to assume any statement as a pre-given rule or unquestionable claim. But, on the other hand, the analyst appears to rely upon a minimal set of a priori assumptions which themselves are exempt from empirical testing—the laws of analytic metapsychology. While trying to be a scientific doctor, Freud is closer to being a meta-physician. How can Lacan sustain his two different reading of Descartes in light of this tension?

In an essay on the sources and justifications for Lacan's conception of the sciences and scientificity, Jean-Claude Milner proposes a distinction between the "ideal of science" and an "ideal science." Some historians of science such as Alexandre Koyré—whom Lacan cites as an influential authority—associate scientificity in part with increasing formalization *à la* both mathematics and an experimental methodology guaranteeing the verificatory value of empirical evidence.[11] Lacan's claim about Descartes as the forefather of psychoanalytic science parallels Koyré's insistence that Descartes shifts all science as a whole onto a mathematical foundation, thereby giving birth to a "new science"—that is, modern science.[12] Formalization functions as an ideal to which different disciplines, if they desire scientific status, attempt to approximate. Consequently, the most formal sciences (for example, physics) become embodiments of this ideal; they become ideal sciences given their epitomization of the ideal of science:

> The ideal of science should not be confused with an ideal science. An ideal science is a given science—for instance, physics—that is supposed to be the model for scientificity. The Ideal of science is but the certitude that an empirical mathematical science is possible in general. (Milner 1991, 33)

Perhaps this distinction is helpful in understanding Lacan's "Cartesianism." The *Cogito* is an ideal of science. That is, the Cartesian subject is the form/position of the subject sought through scientific methodology and, in Lacan's case, structuralist anti-humanism vis-à-vis Freudian metapsychology.[13] But, there is no ideal science of the *Cogito*. Since subjectivity cannot fall as an object within the purview of a method specific to empirical observation, there can be no scientific knowledge of this truth necessarily implied by the birth of the sciences. Or, in the language of the eleventh seminar, the gaze of the *Cogito* cannot be captured in its function as an eye to be gazed at, as an object of scientific investigation.

Lacan clarifies his remarks about Descartes and science, left ambiguous as of 1964, in the opening session of the thirteenth seminar (this lecture, entitled "Science and Truth," is also published separately in

the *Écrits*). Before proceeding to an interrogation of this piece, the 1960 "Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" contains an important clarification regarding the Lacanian understanding of science. Lacan justifiably rejects the positivistic self-conception of the sciences, whereby they see themselves as erected entirely upon an empirical base:

> I shall . . . take as given the fact that empiricism cannot constitute the foundations for a science.
>
> At a second stage, we encounter what has already been constituted, by virtue of a scientific label, under the name of psychology.
>
> A label that I would reject—precisely because, as I will show, the function of the subject, as it is established in Freudian experience, disqualifies from the outset what, under cover of the term 'psychology,' however one dresses up its premises, merely perpetuates an academic framework. (Lacan 1977i, 293–294)

The critique made by Lacan is by now a familiar one. Many authors have argued that sciences, no matter how much they appear to rely solely on empirical data and unbiased observation, cannot function without a non-empirical foundation (such as a set of methodological presuppositions issuing from specific epistemological and ontological convictions). The best-known version of this contention is Thomas Kuhn's "paradigms": The interpretation of empirical data is always governed by implicit scientific paradigms, which themselves are left untested.[14] Similarly, Michel Foucault speaks of "knowledge" (*savoir*) as a foundational space of discursively defined relationships between subject positions and constituted objects. *Savoir* opens the possibility for the creation of a science, but doesn't necessarily lead to one.[15] For Lacan, "psychology" (as epitomized by movements like behaviorism), in its attempts to don the clothing of the natural, observational sciences, feebly denies its necessary roots in a set of inadequately thematized assumptions (the "academic framework" or Foucauldian *savoir*). Any psychological school, in order to advance its empirical research, tacitly relies on a series of metaphysical (or, more properly, metapsychological) presuppositions—a conception of the mind–body split, an understanding of the subject–object distinction, a particular notion of what constitutes consciousness/cognition, and so on. These meta-level positions support the edifice of psychology, and yet much of contemporary psychology pretends to be grounded strictly by its avowed empiricism, its adherence to "the facts themselves." Foucault might say that the psychological tradition criticized by Lacan wants to know nothing of the larger "knowledge space" within which it deploys its statements.

Hence, Lacan's insistence on a continual reexamination of the history of philosophy is part of an attempt to adequately conceptualize the meta-level framework within which psychoanalysis operates. But, Lacan's gesture, apropos Descartes, takes an additional step in contending that both psychoanalysis and the natural sciences are indebted to Descartes. Lacan repeatedly calls the *Cogito* the "subject of science."[16] And, he claims that psychoanalysis, by rigorously examining the genesis and structure of this subjectivity, thus accomplishes an urgent task left untouched by other disciplines—"science, if one looks at it closely, has no memory. Once constituted, it forgets the circuitous path by which it came into being; otherwise stated, it forgets the dimension of truth that psychoanalysis seriously puts to work" (Lacan 1989, 17–18).[17] The contention here is that the universal subject implied by the observational scheme of scientific method is a type of subject whose universality, which itself relies on the subject being utterly devoid of any positive features, is the model of scientific subjectivity.[18] The scientific observer, in order to operate as the absolutely neutral witness to the empirical verification of hypotheses, must be emptied of all determinate contents. The method of scientific practice alone remains as the skeletal frame through which this subject cognizes given phenomena. Consequently, the subjective position necessitated by the implied subject of the observational methodology of science is none other than the *Cogito* qua "empty spot,"[19] or what Alain Badiou, addressing the connection between Descartes and Lacan, refers to as a "pure void" capable of being sutured to an indefinite multiplicity of signifying elements.[20] As Žižek formulates it, science demands what Descartes provides—a "subject bereft of subjectivity."[21]

Lacan is interested in stressing the uniqueness of the Freudian field. Situating Descartes as the ancestor of analytic theory serves this end. Lacan notes that the Freudian subject, especially as treated by metapsychology, contains no determinate contents. Unlike Jung, who places a set of "archetypes" at the foundation of the human psyche, Freud deliberately stays at a level of elaboration where only the topographical, economic, and/or dynamic structuration of psychical systems is specified. Speaking of Freud, Lacan states:

> Witness his break with the most prestigious of his followers, Jung, as soon as the latter slipped into something whose function can only be defined as an attempt to reinstate a subject endowed with depths (with an 's'), i.e., a subject constituted by a relationship—said to be archetypal—to knowledge; the said relationship was not reduced to that exclusively allowed by modern science . . . that relationship to knowledge which,

> since its historically inaugural moment, has retained the name '*cogito*.' (Lacan 1989, 6–7)

Lacan views Jungianism as a misguided anthropomorphization of the Freudian psyche.[22] The unconscious is made familiar to the perspective of consciousness by being stuffed full of a variety of sociocultural representations. A collective reservoir of desexualized, palatable images "humanizes" the psychical apparatus. Lacan continues:

> Whatever the case may be, I posit that every attempt, or even temptation, in which current theory persists in being a relapse, further incarnating the subject, amounts to errancy—ever fruitful in error, but as such faulty [*fautive*] . . .
>
> There is no such thing as a science of man because science's man does not exist, only its subject does. (Lacan 1989, 8)

By "incarnating the subject," Jung deviates from Freud's care in avoiding the fleshing out of the psyche in the recognizable attire of whatever attributes happen to be taken as emblematic of human nature in a given historical state of knowledge.[23] Freudian metapsychology uses a descriptive language deliberately borrowed from the "non-human" sciences (the natural sciences). The psyche is captured as, for instance, a series of quantitative displacements of energy, a topography of interlinked systems, and so on. If analysis isn't a "science of man," it struggles, in emphasizing form over content, to be a science of the "metapsychological subject." And, this metapsychological subject is the subject of science to the extent that "true sciences," as formalized/formalizable systems (in opposition to the "human sciences"), pay no heed to humanisms of any sort. The subject of such systems is not a recognizably anthropomorphic being.[24] Lacan strives to accomplish that erasure of the figure of man described by Foucault in the famous concluding lines of *Les Mots et les choses*.[25]

Having reached this point in Lacan's work, between 1964 and 1965 a discrepancy in his perspectives on the *Cogito* emerges. In the eleventh seminar, the Cartesian subject is employed primarily as a regulative concept in analytic practice. The analyst assumes from the outset that the unconscious can and will speak of itself; the repressed subject (the *je-sujet de l'inconscient*) will come to be in the place where *ça parle*. That is to say, the Freudian injunction *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* testifies, to some extent, to the analyst's faith in addressing a certain subject (or, "subjectivization effect") as the interpellated interlocutor hiding behind the ego and its

symptoms. In 1964, Lacan identifies this *Ich* as the presupposed *Cogito* qua interpretive vanishing point.

In the thirteenth seminar, Lacan's emphasis shifts—the Cartesian subject is no longer simply a presupposition on the side of the analyst and his/her interpretive technique, but actually characterizes the essence of all subjects as conceived by analytic theory. (Along these lines, Žižek claims that Descartes is a structuralist anti-humanist *avant la lettre*.)[26] The analysand, insofar as she/he is reconstructed and dissected on the basis of Freudian metapsychology, is stripped of his/her particular, anthropomorphic features. Analysis treats the psyche as governed by a set of universally valid laws and processes. From this perspective, the Freudian subject is the *Cogito* because Freud relies on a metapsychologically defined psychical apparatus devoid of all determinate contents.[27] Discussing this empty, neutral subject, Mladen Dolar maintains that:

> For being empty, it can be universal, and it can indeed be seen as the form of subjectivity implied by science, a merely formal subjectivity purified of all content and substance. Each proposition of science must display the ability to be posited universally, that is, in such a way that it can be assumed by the empty form of subjectivity epitomized by cogito. (Dolar 1998, 15)

Furthermore, Lacan establishes a distinction between *savoir* (knowledge) and *vérité* (truth).[28] The determinate materials divulged in the course of an analysis—the verbal associations of the patient, the dreams offered for interpretation, the blunders, the manners of acting-out, and so on—are, for Lacan, on the level of "knowledge." The analyst observes and notes these materials in his/her search for unconscious truth.[29] And, in line with Cartesian skepticism, the empirical phenomena constituting the base of the analyst's *savoir* particular to a given analysand are always–already suspended in their apparent, dubitable meaning;[30] every individual piece of material surfacing over the course of an analysis is haunted by the permanent possibility of being interpreted otherwise, of suddenly shifting its significance. The doubt judiciously exercised by the analyst aims at locating the *vérité* concealed within this unstable morass of "evidence." The truth that Lacan pursues is that of the unconscious *je,* the Freudian *Ich* that must come to be through this modified version of radical skepticism that is psychoanalysis.[31]

In "Science and Truth," Lacan transforms his 1950s formula *ça parle* into "I, the truth, am speaking."[32] Analysis strives to isolate this empty locus of enunciation by questioning the significance of all determinate utterances produced by this "speaking *vérité*." Thus far, this seems per-

fectly in accord with the reading of Descartes from 1964: The *Cogito* is a presupposition regulating and guiding the analyst's search for the "real" unconscious. But, Lacan does indeed court the hypostatization fallacy: "Science's man" might be an immaterial chimera, but the "subject of science" (specifically, the psychoanalytic *Cogito* qua Freudian subject) does "exist." Again, one might ask what the status and nature of this existence is for Lacan. Similarly, is the *Cogito* merely an artificial ideal extending from the analyst's ear, or is it a true, actual portrayal of all subjects? Is this a discursive construct, or something more?

In the later sessions of the thirteenth seminar, Lacan apparently returns to his general position from 1964. He weaves together the birth of the subject of science, the emergence of neurosis as correlative with this birth of the Cartesian subject, and the place of this subjectivity in psychoanalysis. Regarding the analytic *Cogito,* Lacan relegates it to the clinical apparatus—"I affirm that it does not exist, however singular this may appear to you, that it only exists, I would say, in a completed form from the agency of the psychoanalytic clinic and therapeutics" (*SXIII,* 1/12/66). The Cartesian subject here functions as the *ça parle,* as the ideal, regulative vanishing point of analytic interpretation. Again, this is not Lacan's last word on Descartes—one must examine texts other than just the eleventh and thirteenth seminars to get an accurate picture of the relationship between these two thinkers.

## §11 The Philosophical Status of Psychoanalysis After Lacan

Why this detour through Descartes? How does this demonstrate a strong tie between psychoanalysis and modern philosophy? Serge Leclaire describes the position from which the analyst listens to his/her analysands as a paradoxical, problematic one. The analyst must strike a virtually unattainable balance between universal theory and its always-unique application to particular cases:

> [O]ne may glimpse what makes for both the necessity and the difficulty of a true theory of psychoanalysis. This theory is necessary if one is not to let psychoanalysis be practiced under the exclusive sign of intuition (or the 'sixth sense' as clinicians say). Otherwise, there is the risk of seeing analysis go the way of a kind of phantasmatization-for-two that would place it, by this very fact, outside any possible order as well as any analysis in its formal implication. (Leclaire 1998b, 15)

Leclaire continues:

> Conversely, this theory is difficult to establish because adapting psychoanalysis to a complete formalization (which is what the common effort to theorize naturally aims to achieve) would have to exclude from its field, ipso facto, the very possibility of analysis in search of extreme singularity. . . .
>
> Only a true theory can advance a formalization that maintains, without reducing it, the domain of singularity; the always recurring difficulty of psychoanalysis, which no institution will ever be able to resolve, derives from the fact that it is vulnerable, on the one hand, to the degradation of a closed systematization and, on the other, to the anarchy of intuitive processes. The theory of psychoanalysis has to keep both of these pitfalls simultaneously in view, to avoid them but also to orient itself by them. The rigorousness of unconscious desire, its logic, is revealed only to whoever respects simultaneously these two apparently contradictory requirements that are order and singularity. (Leclaire 1998b, 15–16)

Leclaire's demand is understandable, but impossible to completely fulfill. Using "good judgement"—in, perhaps, the Kantian sense of judgment as the conjoining of the universal concepts of the understanding (the "general logic" of analytic theory) with the singular instances of empirical intuition (the data of each analysis)[33]—the analyst can and must cautiously decide when an analytic concept (for example, the matrix of the Oedipal conflict) is applicable to a specific cluster of materials produced by an analysand.

The comparison of Leclaire's description of the analyst's balancing act with the Kantian notion of judgment is further justified by Kant himself—"whereas understanding is capable of being taught and equipped by rules, the power of judgement is a particular talent that cannot be taught at all but can only be practiced" (Kant 1996, 206 [A 133/B 172]). Leclaire clarifies why analysis is sometimes called an "impossible profession": Although obedient to a theoretical system, the analyst is nonetheless always left on his/her own when facing the "abyss of judgment" involved in deciding the whens, whats, and hows of delivering an interpretation. Just as Kant observes that no amount of rules in "general logic" alone can provide the infallible measure for the application of these same rules, so too is metapsychological theory incapable of delineating the proper use of its own concepts in particular instances. Lacan points to this difficulty in declaring that, as a foundational principle of his École freudienne (embodied in the procedure of the "*passe*"), the analyst's author-

ity comes from nowhere else but his/her own person—"the psychoanalyst derives his authorisation only from himself" (Lacan 2001b, 243).[34] The authority of the universal frame of psychoanalysis is "sutured" into place by the particular, contingent acts that ground this universality.[35]

The reason why Leclaire's prescription is unfeasible is that he ignores the fact, already mentioned, that certain minimal, a priori ideas ("fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis") must always–already be in place for analysis to begin. Lacan's 1964 employment of the *Cogito* means precisely this: Without the conviction supported by the faith in the inevitability of the *ça parle* producing the truth of the unconscious *Ich/je,* the analyst would have no impetus to initiate interpretation. Symptoms neither appear nor promise an eventual deciphering in the absence of a select number of presuppositions derived from a nonempirical metapsychology. Paul Ricoeur concurs:

> The concepts of analysis are to be judged according to their status as conditions of the possibility of analytic experience, insofar as the latter operates in the field of speech . . . the concepts of analytic theory are the notions that must be elaborated so that one may order and systematize analytic experience; I will call them *the conditions of possibility of a semantics of desire.* It is in this sense that they can and should be criticized, perfected, or even rejected, but not as theoretical concepts of an observational science. (Ricoeur 1970, 375)

Elsewhere, Ricoeur words it thus:

> The metapsychology is not an optional, adventitious construction; it is not an ideology, a speculation; it has to do with what Kant called the determining judgments of experience; it determines the field of interpretation. (Ricoeur 1970, 433)

Leclaire's error results from a failure to adequately differentiate between the implicit hierarchies separating the various levels of Freudian concepts. While something like the Oedipus complex is relative to social, cultural, and historical circumstances (one should note the lack of references to this complex in the metapsychological writings, as contrasted with its frequent mention in the case studies and technical papers), conceptual structures such as the topographies, drives, repression, and sublimation are proposed as invariant laws governing every human psyche.[36] Although psychoanalytic theory is often encountered, even in Freud's texts, as a confused assortment of anthropological observations, historical speculations, and cultural references, there nonetheless exists an ahistorical founda-

tion—the metapsychological concepts treated as a priori axioms of psychoanalytic reason.[37] As Foucault observes, because of its transcendental framework, Freudian psychoanalysis is bound to appear "mythological" to other sciences.[38]

In his 1993 *Tarrying with the Negative,* Žižek takes a position similar to the one advocated here. He urges his readers to understand Lacan as a type of transcendental philosopher:

> [W]hy should we not also claim for Lacan the title of 'transcendental philosopher?' Is not his entire work an endeavor to answer the question of how *desire* is possible? Does he not offer a kind of 'critique of pure desire,' of the pure faculty of desiring? Are not all his fundamental concepts so many keys to the enigma of desire? Desire is constituted by 'symbolic castration,' the original loss of the *Thing;* the void of this loss is filled out by *objet petit a,* the fantasy-object; this loss occurs on account of our being 'embedded' in the symbolic universe which derails the 'natural' circuit of our needs; etc., etc. (Žižek 1993, 3)

Yet, in his 1999 *The Ticklish Subject,* Žižek seemingly performs a complete and total reversal: Lacan mustn't be read as a transcendentalist. The later Lacanian prioritization of the Real over the Symbolic—that is, the reversal of the 1950s structuralist glorification of the Symbolic—inverts the standard metaphysical marginalization of the empiricoparticular:

> This reference to the Real also enables us to answer one of the recurrent criticisms of Lacan according to which he is a formalist who, in a Kantian way, asserts an a priori 'transcendental' void around which the symbolic universe is structured, a void which can then be filled by a contingent positive object. So is Lacan actually a kind of structuralist Kantian, asserting the ontological priority of the symbolic order over the contingent material elements which occupy its places (claiming, say, that the 'real' father is nothing but a contingent bearer of the purely formal structural function of symbolic prohibition)? What blurs this clear distinction between the empty symbolic form and its contingent positive content is precisely the *Real:* a stain which sutures the empty frame on to a part of its content, the 'indivisible remainder' of some 'pathological' contingent materiality which, as it were, 'colors' the allegedly neutral universality of the symbolic frame, and thus functions as a kind of umbilical cord through which the empty framework of the symbolic form is anchored in its content. This short circuit between form and content provides the most succinct rejection or subversion of (what one usually perceives as) 'Kantian formalism': the very transcendental-formal frame which forms

> the horizon, the condition of possibility, of the content which appears within it is enframed by a part of its content, since it is attached to a particular point within its content. What we are dealing with here is the paradox of a kind of 'pathological a priori': a pathological (in the Kantian sense of innerworldly contingency) element that sustains the consistency of the formal frame within which it occurs. (Žižek 1999b, 276–277)

A chance empirical event/encounter (the *tuché* of the Real) serves as the unconscious nucleus or kernel around which the Symbolic productions of the *parlêtre* (the *automaton* of the Symbolic) turn.[39] Žižek's argument contra himself—in the second of the two quotations above, he talks as though someone other than himself made claims about a Kantian Lacan—implicitly mobilizes the Lacan of the mid-sixties against the structuralist Lacan of the 1950s. Thus, in examining the relationship between transcendental philosophy and psychoanalytic theory, support is secured for distinguishing between distinct periods of Lacan's teaching.

But, Žižek's inconsistent stance with regard to Lacan's philosophical inclinations ignores a more fundamental systematic consistency undercutting the superficial chronologicization of Lacan's theoretical development. Typically, Lacan is segmented along the lines of an early, middle, and late sequence, corresponding to the shifting priority assigned to each of the three registers—the Imaginary (1930s–1940s), the Symbolic (1950s), and the Real (1960s–1970s). Contrary to a reigning exegetical consensus, the early Lacan of the thirties and forties doesn't actually assign the Imaginary a preeminent position in his thought; both the 1938 family complexes article and the 1946 logical time essay emphasize the foundational nature of the Symbolic, whether as "structuring complex" or "logical 'I.'" Similarly, the late Lacan, despite the increasing importance of the Real, doesn't abandon his 1950s transcendentalism. Instead, he "ups the ante" for transcendental philosophy: If the subject is indeed genetic, as psychoanalysis asserts, then an account of the possibility conditions inherent to this subject must include those conditions responsible for its very genesis (what Lacan seeks in his musings on causality from the mid-sixties). As Bertrand Ogilvie aptly puts it, Lacan, in posing "the question of the condition of possibility of the conditions of possibility,"[40] treats his interlinked notions of the register of the Real and the function of causality as precisely such "ultra-transcendental" grounds underlying the structural scaffolding of the form of subjectivity generated as a necessary effect of its anterior causes. (Žižek's rejection of a transcendental-style reading of Lacan is thus based on too narrow an understanding of the term "transcendental"—a narrowness implicitly contested by Lacan's endeavor to uncover the possibility conditions preceding and giving rise to the full-fledged

subject that eventually comes to play its irreducible mediating role in the constitution of reality.) A "genetic logic," first heralded in the piece on logical time, represents a consistent concern stretching across the entire span of Lacan's theoretical labors. Despite the multiple changes in emphasis, Lacan continually searches for the fundamentals of this elusive logic.

In rebuking a quasi-Kantian reading of Lacan, Žižek erroneously equates the Symbolic with the transcendental (as necessary and ahistorical) and the Real with the empirical (as contingent and historical). However, what is the point of the late Lacan's favorite topological model, the Borromean knot? In a Borromean knot, if one of the three rings is broken, the entire knot comes undone. For Lacan, this means that the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary exist only insofar as they are joined together in a triadic interrelationship. The late Lacan wishes to escape from his past habit of perpetually prioritizing one category over the other two.[41] The fundamental structure of the Lacanian system resides in the mutual codependence of his three categories—categories which he posits as necessary conditions for the psychoanalytic field.[42] Lacan's true transcendentalism mobilizes all three of his registers, with the dynamic processes of interaction between the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary functioning as effective possibility conditions for human reality. By itself, uncoupled from its entanglement with the Real and the Imaginary (*à la* the figure of the Borromean knot), the Symbolic isn't a transcendental function in the strictest of senses for Lacan. In his last full seminar, Lacan posits "an equivalence between structure and topology." And, in the 1950s, "structure" is a term treated as almost synonymous with the Symbolic. Consequently, if topology maps the transcendental dimension of analytic experience, then the interaction between the Real and the Symbolic (which Žižek's recent position appeals to) is an a priori facet of psychoanalytic theory. Even if the Symbolic no longer occupies on its own the central role in the late Lacan, the dynamic by which the contingency of the Real founds the pseudo-universal framework of the Symbolic is itself the very transcendental structure sought by Lacan throughout his theoretical reversals. (Žižek, apropos Schelling's meditations on universality, admits as much in his 1997 essay "The Abyss of Freedom.")[43] The early Lacan speaks of a "logical process," a "logical movement," and "the 'I''s logical genesis." The 1946 essay fails to provide a functional model of just such a logic. But, the late Lacan, in focusing on the dynamic interaction of his three categories—instead of focusing on one category at different times, as Žižek and others have it—belatedly makes good on this early failure.

Similarly, in a critique of Lacan, Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe identify Lacan's systematicity as being constructed around gaps

or contingencies. In his reinterpretation of Saussure, although Lacan maintains that the bar between signifier and signified cannot be eliminated—that is, there is no ultimate closure of meaning—he nonetheless makes the bar itself into a point of theoretical closure:

> *At least* as a system, Lacan's discourse . . . reduces the gaps that it hollows out and comes to a halt on its own sliding (or stops its sliding by giving it the form of the circle). In this stopping, it centers itself—and this center is the bar itself, whose thickness serves thus to conceal a point. This is the very point of the system, its punctuation: that is, the *concept* from which it is possible to order the elements and the relations of *a logic of the signifier* which is, thus, without diversion, a *logic* pure and simple. (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1992, 112)

As Derrideans, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe have an almost automatic aversion to anything that appears "systematic" ("totalizing," "reductive," "violent," and so on). Despite the authors themselves seeing this as an incisive attack on Lacan, their reading is useful as a counterbalance to the later Žižekian position: The manner in which the empirico-contingent Real functions as the "gap" to which is sutured the pseudotranscendent Symbolic is itself the basis for the Lacanian structural system (as embodied by the Borromean knot). Also, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe draw a comparison between Kant and Lacan that proves fruitful: Just as Kant's Copernican revolution involves recentering metaphysics upon the subject and away from the impossible Thing (*das Ding an sich*), Lacan makes the "impossible Thing" the absent center of a coherent system.[44] In his engagement with temporality, the Lacan of the mid-sixties identifies "Real time" as the always–already "lost cause" setting the Symbolic, spatio-synchronic *automaton* in motion. The closed circuits of the symbolic order, while being unable to recover their original driving force qua "material cause," enable this absent center to be outlined in its hegemonic function. Lacan is all the more Kantian for having the Real be the inaccessible "in itself" that operates as the invisible focal point for the rest of his psychoanalytic architectonic of the subject.

Philippe Julien explains the correspondence between Lacan's quest for a genetic transcendentalism and his invocation of Descartes. Julien notes:

> While the Freudian subject is very much a revival of the Cartesian *cogito,* the foundation of its certitude has been revised. Between the subject's birth in the past (*Wo Es war*) and the subject's present certitude (*soll Ich werden*), there is a temporal *space.* Freud called it deferred action. In the

> deferred action of unconscious formations, certitude rests on a subject already born from an 'it (*ça*) thinks,' before certitude occurs. (Julien 1994, 111)

The *Cogito* is treated as analogous with the Freudian *Ich* that must "come to be" in the place "where it (*ça*) was." *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden* includes a temporal movement. The *Cogito–Ich* is the Symbolic *je*/"I" that retroactively subjectivizes its own conditions of emergence, conditions structurally preceding it as its historico-unconscious cause. What Žižek designates as the contingent Real, Lacan, in "Science and Truth," calls "material cause."[45] In the eleventh seminar, this goes by the name of *tuché*. The analyst presides over the process whereby the *Cogito–Ich* is made to emerge through "subjective destitution": In being lead to a confrontation with its "real cause" through "traversing the fantasy," the symptom-laden ego is divested of its determinate, Imaginary, and essentially neurotic features.[46] What remains, according to Lacanian theory, is the empty void of subjectivity ($ as *Cogito*). Symptoms and fantasies are produced in the desperate attempt to fill this "hole in the Symbolic."

Beneath all this Lacanian terminology, where is the connection between *Cogito* and temporality? The opportune moments—the "open sesame" of the unconscious—providing for the very possibility of this "curative" analytic reduction obey a scansion determined by select turning/quilting points in the diachronic unfolding of the *savoir* particular to the analytic clinic. The lines of approach to the *Cogito–Ich* run "back to the future" along the "temporal loops" constructed on the basis of the dialecticized interaction between past and present. If *Cogito* is indeed, as Lacan says, "the presupposition of the unconscious," then its conditions of ex-sistence are submitted to the dynamic of the temporal pulsation of the unconscious.[47] Having traced lines of confluence between psychoanalysis, modern philosophy, and themes connected with time/temporality, certain urgent questions remain: Who are the philosophers most important for analytic theory at its metapsychological level? How, if at all, do Freud and Lacan employ and/or modify various versions of the distinction between time and temporality developed by philosophy? Is psychoanalysis in need of a refined "metaphysical" reconception of temporality? Before returning to the texts of Freud once again, tarrying with philosophy offers a desirable detour, a detour enabling a further reevaluation of the status of psychoanalytic metapsychology.

4

# Kant and the Conditions of Possibility for the Psychoanalytic Subject

## §12 Kant's Anthropology and the Splitting of the Subject

In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View,* the precritical Kant explores, among other things, the topic of human madness. Speaking of madness in general, Kant contrasts reason with "unreason." As reason provides a matrix of regulative ideas through which the intuited world is rendered intelligible to the cognizing subject, so unreason frames the experiential universe of the madman:

> I have doubts whether there is a distinction between general lunacy (*delirium generale*) and that which is fixed upon a definite object (*delirium circa objectum*). Unreason (which is something positive and not just a lack of reason) is like reason, a mere form to which objects can be adapted; and both reason and unreason, therefore, concern themselves with the general. However, what first comes into the mind at the (usually sudden) outbreak of a crazy disposition (the accidentally encountered subject matter about which the person will rave later) will be from then on the insane person's chief concern, since it is, because of the novelty of the impression, more firmly fixed in his mind than anything else occurring afterward. (Kant 1978, 116)

Mental pathologies, insofar as they function as manifestations of particular forms of unreason, are "something positive and not just a lack of reason." The laws of reason concern themselves with providing a coherent, systematically unified reality through the employment of the concepts of the understanding in relation to the manifold of (empirical) intuition—and, of course, also through the extension of the concepts of the under-

standing beyond the bounds of intuition. Likewise, after suffering as a result of an "accidentally encountered subject matter"—Kant could be construed as speaking here about the *tuché* of a traumatic encounter, and Lacan himself sees causality as the primary link between his analytic theory and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*[1]—the "insane person" constructs an idiosyncratic framework of ideas, concepts, and/or maxims. This framework endeavors to (re)construct a meaningful, integrated unity around the contingent, pathological material introduced by the chance encounter with "the novelty of the impression." (As regards this "novelty," Freud similarly defines trauma as an event for which the subject is unprepared in terms of prior anticipation.) As both the later Lacan and Žižek assert, the *automaton* of unconscious reason continually reconstructs and reshapes itself around the intrusion of the Real. For Kant, this "suturing" of the pseudo-universal matrix of unreason by the pathological-contingent event is one of the essential definitions of madness per se.

Cutrofello's reading of Kant and Lacan, in *Imagining Otherwise,* contends that the unconscious can be defined as a body of analytic a posteriori judgments. Consequently, the unconscious is the very seat of unreason. But, as Kant himself notes, unreason functions almost identically to the faculty of reason, and thus is not merely the absence of rationality. Why is this the case? If unreason is defined as the suturing of the universal laws combining both intuition and the understanding into a systematic whole by an accidental, chance intuition, then any a posteriori judgments (those with reference to the manifold of perception) elevated to an analytic status (to being immutable, nonempirical judgments functioning as essential components of subjective cognition) are, by definition, unrational.[2] However, since both reason and unreason consist of regulative ideas—and not constitutive ones that could easily be tested like empirically verifiable assertions—Cutrofello notes that Kant has no means by which to decisively differentiate between rational and unrational subjects:

> A deranged subject could well hold to a particular set of beliefs even in the face of what a 'normal' person would call sufficient disconfirming evidence. How are we to explain such behavior? It is precisely here, of course, that the specificity of psychoanalytic questioning arises—and Kant clearly sees himself as a 'normal' subject capable of psychoanalyzing 'abnormal' subjects. But Kant sidesteps the prior question of how I, the critical subject, can tell whether I am a normal or an abnormal subject. At issue is the question that Descartes poses in his first Meditation: How do I know that I myself am not mad? In principle, transcendental philosophy should not be exempt from this challenge, but Kant has very little to say on the topic . . . The question that eventually emerges from

> this is not how we can tell who is really normal and who is really mad. The question, rather, is whether it is possible to distinguish normality from madness in a rigorous way at all. (Cutrofello 1997, 18)

Since both reason and unreason appeal to the same empirico-intuitive determinants, there is no readily apparent means of falsifying the regulative ideas of unreason. Just like the ideas of reason, the delusional subject's analytic truths serve as nonempirical judgments unifying the field of experiential phenomena. In characterizing psychosis, for instance, Lacanian analyst Bruce Fink describes it as an attempt to provide a minimum of stable meaning in the face of anxieties provoked by certain points of subjective incomprehensibility. According to Fink, the "delusional metaphor" (what Cutrofello would call the epitome of an analytic a posteriori formation) grants a minimal degree of Symbolic consistency for a subject floundering in the flux of the Imaginary (here analogous to the Kantian manifold of intuitive perception).[3]

Despite its many advances over Descartes' thoughts on the matter, the Kantian theory of the subject is not immune to a skepticism entertaining the possibility of a "pathological *apriori*" underlying such subjectivity. As Derrida suggests, perhaps modern subjectivity qua *Cogito* (including the Kantian subject) is the mere structural condition for both reason and madness, being neither necessarily insane nor indubitably rational. Derrida's assertion thereby justifies Lacan's recourse to modern rationalism as essential to grounding psychoanalytic metapsychology (the structure of subjectivity common to all subjects, whether rational or irrational, is the ultimate object of Freudian inquiry):

> [T]he instantaneous experience of the Cogito, at its most intense, when reason and madness have not yet been separated . . . is neither to take the part of reason as reasonable order, nor the part of disorder and madness, but is rather to grasp, once more, the source which permits reason *and* madness to be determined and stated. (Derrida 1978a, 58)

Resorting to psychoanalytic theory, Cutrofello maintains that, as regards the hybrid Kantian–Lacanian subject, the difference between the "normal" and the "pathological" coincides with the psychical location of the analytic a posteriori judgments regulating subjective experience. For the normal subject, these judgments are unconscious—that is, repressed, in which case the normal subject is mildly neurotic. For the pathological subject, these judgments are conscious—"Perhaps the only difference between a 'normal' subject and what Kant calls a 'deranged' subject will be that all of the analytic a posteriori judgments of the 'normal' subject re-

main unconscious, whereas those of the 'deranged' subject are present in consciousness" (Cutrofello 1997, 20). In relatively more extreme forms of neurosis, prominent symptoms appear in the field of conscious experience, and, in psychosis, the unconscious subsists on the very surface of things. (Fink contends that the psychotic has, for all intents and purposes, no unconscious.)[4] What Cutrofello implies is that the Kantian critical apparatus needs, in a sense, the Freudian psychical topography in order to, so to speak, sustain the sanity of its version of subjectivity.

Although it might be interesting to pursue this line of discussion further, speculations about the relative "mental health" of the Kantian subject are not of the greatest concern here. Actually, a much more straightforward reading of Kant—one that does not attempt to read him against himself by overemphasizing the significance of mental pathology in his philosophy—is vital to this project's efforts to adequately situate the place of temporality in psychoanalytic metapsychology. Introducing a critical turn in psychoanalysis not only rectifies Freud's hypostatization fallacy regarding the unconscious, but also inoculates analysis against charges brought by philosophers and scientists alike. Philosophers accuse Freud of being too empirical: Psychoanalysis isn't "authentic" or "genuine" philosophy because it relies on observational data combined with a hodgepodge of elements drawn haphazardly from the human and social sciences. Scientists allege that psychoanalysis isn't empirical enough, being tainted by an air of quasi-religious, speculative dogmatism. In recasting the unconscious and its conceptual correlates as regulative maxims of psychoanalytic reason, employed in the service of systematically unifying and comprehending the field of consciousness, a successful negotiation between these two contradictory criticisms is achieved: Psychoanalysis is an empirical practice licensed by a series of metapsychological a priori assumptions—assumptions justified by what Kant might call the "interests of Reason."[5] Furthermore, beyond this inoculation effect, the conception of subjectivity put forward in Kant's critical philosophy is the true predecessor of the Lacanian subject. Even if Lacan is right that the Cartesian subject is the historical condition of possibility for Freudian theory, one is nonetheless compelled to accept that the Kantian subject is the possibility condition for the split subject of the Lacanian system—"Kant paved the way for psychoanalysis . . . by splitting the subject between two realms, one subject to the determinations of historical conditions, the other not" (Copjec 1994, 96).

Much of Žižek's work can be understood as a reinterpretation of modern philosophy in light of psychoanalysis. Not only does Žižek claim that psychoanalysis is indebted to certain philosophical predecessors, but he argues that analytic theory, as formulated by Lacan's return to Freud,

is the most powerful inheritor of the Cartesian legacy (a legacy including Kant and post-Kantian German idealism). In so doing, he rescues psychoanalysis from a hasty appropriation by post-structuralism and simultaneously undercuts basic assumptions operative in postmodern critiques of "Western metaphysics." Žižek charges many contemporary philosophers and philosophical trends with having symptomatically misunderstood the fundamental features of the subject of modern philosophy, a form of subjectivity that retroactively becomes understood in full through the insights of Freudian–Lacanian metapsychology.

A wide range of current theoretical discourses regard the modern subject—epitomized by the Cartesian *Cogito*—as a failed notion meriting critique and dismissal. Post-structuralism, deconstruction, feminism, embodiment studies, environmental ethics, and so on all denounce this subject for their own reasons. Žižek accurately observes that this rejection is indeed symptomatic in a strict sense: If the *Cogito* is an anachronistic, inapplicable depiction of subjectivity in a postmodern world, then why must people continually sound its death knell? Why must professional academics perpetually applaud themselves for "overcoming the Western metaphysical subject?" Žižek, parodying *The Communist Manifesto,* sums up these observations in the opening lines of *The Ticklish Subject* by noting that, "A spectre is haunting Western academia . . . the spectre of the Cartesian subject. All academic powers have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre" (Žižek 1999b, 1).

On what presuppositions do postmodern critiques of the *Cogito* rest, and why are these emblematic of a basic miscomprehension? Arguably, Kant radicalizes the Cartesian subject by splitting it along an unbridgeable noumenal–phenomenal divide (this split appears both in the precritical *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and in the *Critique of Pure Reason*). The *Cogito* cannot be substantialized (*ergo sum*) precisely because it cannot be reduced to a mere object or (re)presentation. Simply put, as a subject, it cannot conveniently transform itself into a stable, inert "object" and nonetheless retain the subjective function of cognizing itself as an object. In other words, there is no self-transparency, no ability on the part of the subject to empty itself out into a state of determinate objectivity in which it can render its self-representation equal to its powers of self-consciousness. (Although Kant is the first to radically highlight this limit to self-consciousness, Descartes's second meditation admittedly foreshadows this trajectory in rejecting introspectively encountered self-images as adequate or equivalent representations of the *Cogito.*)[6] Kant's subject is hardly the product of an introspection licensed by a ridiculously simplistic subject–object dualism (a portrayal that makes Kant into a straw man)—"It must be pointed out again and again

that Kantian self-consciousness consists of an empty formal gesture of reflection that has nothing whatsoever in common with psychological introspection" (Žižek 1994, 186). Thus, part of Lacan's uniqueness—especially in comparison with both the contemporaries and successors in his theoretical milieu—lies in his psychoanalytic revivification of the divide constitutive of Kantian self-consciousness.[7] As Jean-Marie Vaysse phrases it, "Kantian thought is . . . the moment of a fracture of subjectivity" (Vaysse 1999, 196).

Hence, the contemporary critiques of the modern subject (especially as Kantian and/or Hegelian self-consciousness), which denounce this subject as "absolute," "totalizing," "monadic," "homogenizing," and so on, are misguided. Kant's entire point is that self-consciousness is, if one can put it this way, unable to catch its own tail. Reason leads one to necessarily conceive of oneself as a permanent, enduring ipseity; the constant inhering of the quality of "mineness" to all acts of consciousness foists a "necessary illusion" of subject-as-substance on consciousness. However, although reason generates the compulsive conceptual necessity of positing a noumenal, atemporal "I," every act of self-apprehension occurring within the limits of possible experience cannot avoid reducing this "I" to the status of a phenomenal, spatio-temporal "I"—a self-image, a determinate self-representation. The pure "I think" is impossible to encounter or "know" except through the mediation of "I think x."[8] In a sense, for Kant, pure thinking being is an unknowable blind spot, something analogous to the *Ding an sich*. Specifically, the unavoidable experiential constraint of the pure form of intuition qua inner sense—that is, time as the pure form of inner sense, characterizing the phenomenal dimension of Kantian subjectivity—results in the permanent inaccessibility of the noumenal subject's atemporality.

Such authors as Heidegger and Deleuze assert that the Kantian subject is essentially a temporal subject. Focusing on time's interference with self-consciousness' ability to achieve self-transparency, Heidegger writes:

> According to its essence, time is pure affection of itself . . .
>
> As pure self-affection, time is not an acting affection that strikes a self which is at hand. Instead, as pure it forms the essence of something like self-activating. However, if it belongs to the essence of the finite subject to be able to be activated as a self, then time as pure self-affection forms the essential structure of subjectivity. (Heidegger 1990, 132)

In line with identifying time as "the essential structure of subjectivity," Deleuze argues that, unlike his predecessors, Kant subjugates space (outer

sense) to time, and not vice versa. Time is not to be measured as spatial movement. Rather, movement is conditioned by time:

> Time is out of joint, time is unhinged. The hinges are the axis around which the door turns. *Cardo,* in Latin, designates the subordination of time to the cardinal points through which the periodic movements that it measures pass. As long as time remains on its hinges, it is subordinate to movement: it is the measure of movement, interval or number. This was the view of ancient philosophy. But time out of joint signifies the reversal of the movement-time relationship. It is now movement which is subordinate to time. Everything changes, including movement . . . Time is no longer related to the movement which it measures, but movement is related to the time which conditions it: this is the first great Kantian reversal in the *Critique of Pure Reason.* Time is no longer defined by succession because succession concerns only things and movements which are in time. If time itself were succession, it would need to succeed in another time, and on to infinity. (Deleuze 1984, vii)

Deleuze appeals to the "Transcendental Aesthetic" in these remarks. As is well known, Kant argues that there are two "pure forms of intuition," namely, two formal "lowest common denominators," both of them simultaneously preconditioning and being present within any and every possible experiential presentation—space and time. Furthermore, since the perception of outer objects must obey the laws of simultaneity and succession belonging to the intrinsic condition of all objects as "in time," outer sense is subordinate to inner sense.[9]

But, the arguments in the "Transcendental Aesthetic" are only a small part of the picture. The immediate Kantian objection to the Heidegger–Deleuze interpretation would be the question, "What about the transcendental unity of apperception from the 'Transcendental Deduction?'" Doesn't Kant claim that a logical, pure "I" is exempt from the temporal defiles of intuition? In respect to the connection between time and the Kantian subject, Deleuze indeed proposes a more nuanced approach:

> [T]ime moves into the subject, in order to distinguish the Ego from the I in it. It is the form under which the I affects the ego, that is, the way in which the mind affects itself. It is in this sense that time as immutable form, which could no longer be defined by simple succession, appeared as the form of interiority (inner sense), whilst space, which could no longer be defined by coexistence, appeared for its part as the form of exteriority. 'Form of interiority' means not only that time is internal to

> us, but that our interiority constantly divides us from ourselves, splits us in two: a splitting in two which never runs its course, since time has no end. (Deleuze 1984, ix)

In this passage, Deleuze proves himself to be one so-called post-structuralist who doesn't fall into the trap, denounced by Žižek, of over-simplifying the Kantian subject as a unified wholeness at one with itself, as a kind of idiotic res cogitans. Deleuze's reading here is incredibly precise. The Kantian subject is neither entirely temporal (phenomenal–intuitive) nor utterly timeless (formal–logical). In fact, this subject is split in two because of the mediating interference of time qua inner sense. Time always–already cleaves subjectivity into the "ego" and the "I." The transcendental "I" (the "I" proper) can only ever grasp itself in reflective self-determination by rendering itself as a phenomenal "I" (as an ego). Time, as the predominating pure form of intuition, forces this mediation, which thus blocks access to oneself as an unalterable, transcendental subject.[10] The timeless "I" is always–already the lost "I," paradoxically making determinate acts of consciousness possible while nonetheless remaining forever out of the reflective reach of this same activity. And, as Deleuze notes, this dehiscence between noumenal and phenomenal subjectivity is irreparable, it "never runs its course." (Prior to Deleuze, the young Sartre makes similar points about the relationship between transcendental and empirical consciousness in his 1936 text *The Transcendence of the Ego.*)[11]

In order to more fully appreciate Deleuze's important point about time and the Kantian subject, as well as to adequately develop the significance of the recourse to Kant for this project itself, this gap between noumenal and phenomenal subjectivity must be traced back to its origins prior to the *Critique of Pure Reason*—namely, located within *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View.* Subsequently, the significance of time in the Kantian account of subjectivity will become clearer, and, moreover, progress will be made toward better grasping the crucial distinction between time and temporality.

Kant considers "anthropology" to be an empirical field. For him, anthropology, as man's knowledge about himself, is either knowledge of human physiology (the material nature of man) or knowledge of human cultural products and activities (the sociohistorical nature of man, which Kant dubs "pragmatic").[12] Now, certainly, a pragmatic anthropology does, in fact, pave the way for later arguments made in the first two *Critiques* as well as *The Metaphysics of Morals.* But, for the time being, Kant sees it as something separate from metaphysics qua "first philosophy." Nonetheless, at one decisive point in his *Anthropology* where subjectivity is under dis-

cussion, Kant admits to veering into metaphysical matters.[13] The formulations presented during this brief moment decisively anticipate essential facets of the Kantian subject as presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The moment in question occurs in section four ("On Self-Observation") of the first book ("On the Cognitive Faculty") of the *Anthropology*. Kant states:

> Inner experiences are not like external experiences of objects in space, wherein the objects appear side by side and permanently fixed. The inner sense sees the conditions for its definition only in Time and, consequently, in a state of flux, which is without that permanence of observation necessary for experience. (Kant 1978, 17)

Kant prefigures the distinction between space and time as pure forms of intuition, as argued in the "Transcendental Aesthetic"—but he doesn't here refine this distinction as he later does, making outer sense partially subordinate to inner sense. The primary characteristic of inner sense, given its strictly temporal character, is its continual "state of flux." Thus, Kant hints that introspective self-examination, as a philosophical method, cannot proceed as if one's own (conscious) subjectivity were simply one stable object among others:

> The soul does not really feel, or see itself in another location (for it cannot perceive itself in relation to its position in space without being contradictory, because it would otherwise look at itself as the object of its outer sense, when in itself it is capable of being an object of its inner sense only) . . . (Kant 1978, 114)

The lack of what could be called "objective stability," due to the temporal nature of inner sense, thwarts treating subjectivity as an empirical "thing" to be observed like any other material and/or empirical phenomena encountered by outwardly directed perception.[14]

In a footnote to the passage quoted above, Kant foreshadows his treatment of subjectivity from the "Paralogisms of Pure Reason" in the latter half of the first *Critique*. He establishes a distinction that aligns itself perfectly along the noumenal–phenomenal divide:

> If we consciously imagine for ourselves the inner action (spontaneity), whereby a concept (a thought) becomes possible, we engage in reflection; if we consciously imagine for ourselves the susceptibility (receptivity), whereby a perception (*perceptio*), i.e., empirical observation, becomes possible, we engage in apprehension; however, if we consciously

> imagine both acts, then consciousness of one's self (*apperceptio*) can be divided into that of reflection and that of apprehension. Reflection is a consciousness of the understanding, while apprehension is a consciousness of the inner sense; reflection is pure apperception, and apprehension is empirical apperception; consequently, the former is falsely referred to as the inner sense. (Kant 1978, 17–18)

In its struggle to grasp itself as self-consciousness, the Kantian subject splits into two distinct operations, different-in-kind from each other—reflection and apprehension. Reflection is an examination of the conditions of possibility for the formation of determinate thoughts. Thus, as will be asserted of such investigations in the critical period, reflection aims at uncovering, as intelligible, the transcendental laws governing the structure of subjectivity. As transcendental, these laws, having priority (or, a-prioricity) beyond the limited sphere of the faculty of intuition, are not determinate, empirical factors to be found within inner sense. Hence, reflection uncovers the timeless structure of the subject. (In his *Anthropology,* Kant maintains that "reflection is a consciousness of the understanding"; similarly, in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* the transcendental unity of apperception is presented during an analysis of the faculty of the understanding.)

Apprehension, on the other hand, focuses on particular, determinate thoughts. It only asks how a certain thought or group of thoughts is made possible and registered by cognition. According to Kant, apprehension is restricted to observing the mere succession of presentations occurring in the temporally conditioned activity of inner sense. Instead of having access to the timeless dimension of subjectivity qua understanding (as in reflection), apprehension is restricted to grasping the subject in terms of its (empirical) intuition. Apprehension provides knowledge of inner sense, of a temporal ego-self. In short, reflection is "pure apperception," while apprehension is "empirical apperception."[15]

Further on in the same footnote, Kant asserts that reflection and apprehension, as two distinct modes of self-consciousness, give rise to two correspondingly different forms of knowledge—psychology and logic. Psychology is the result of apprehension, and logic is the result of reflection:

> In psychology we investigate ourselves according to our perceptions of the inner sense; but in logic we make the investigation on the grounds of what the intellectual consciousness supplies us with. Here the self appears to us as twofold (which would be contradictory): (1) the self, as the subject of thinking (in logic), which means pure apperception (the merely reflecting self) of which nothing more can be said, except that it

> is an entirely simple perception. (2) The self, as the object of the perception, consequently also part of the inner sense, contains a multiplicity of definitions which make inner experience possible. (Kant 1978, 18)

At least at the level of appearances, the self resulting from self-consciousness is a split subject; "the self appears to us as twofold," that is, as both a "logical subject" and a "psychological subject."[16] Although this is seemingly "contradictory," it's nonetheless a contradiction constitutive of the nature of Kantian subjectivity. (However, this constitutive contradiction has the sense of being an "antinomy"; Kant's paralogisms are arguably a critical resolution of this "antinomy of subjectivity.")[17] The transcendental subject of reflection (understanding) is a "simple perception," namely, the merely logical presentation "I think" that potentially accompanies any and every act of subjective cognition. (For Kant, the "I think" merely needs to implicitly accompany other representations, without necessarily being an explicit object of continual self-awareness.)[18] The phenomenal subject of apprehension (intuition) is a "multiplicity." The latter subject, as outlined by what Kant calls "psychology," is defined as the aggregate of empirical presentations contained in the faculty of intuition's temporal flux of inner sense.

Are these two subjects of self-consciousness to remain forever incompatible with each other? Is this splitting of Kantian subjectivity irreparable? As with any philosophical question worth pondering, the answer involves both a "yes" and a "no." In the *Anthropology,* Kant contends that the apparent contradiction of this twofold subjective structure can be rectified. He writes:

> To ask whether or not a man conscious of different inner mental changes (either of his thoughts or of fundamental principles assumed by him) can say that he is the selfsame man, is an absurd question. For he can be conscious of these changes in the first place only on condition that he represents himself, in the different situations, as one and the same subject. The human ego is indeed twofold as regards its form (manner of representation), but not with respect to its matter (content). (Kant 1978, 18)

This same Kantian gesture is to be found in the "Transcendental Deduction": Despite the dehiscence of subjectivity resulting from the interference of temporal mediation in self-consciousness, all cognition (whether as reflection or apprehension) belongs to a single, "simple," selfsame "I" (what will later become the transcendental unity of apperception). In an overly simplistic formulation, one might say that the timeless, overarching

space within which the two halves of subjectivity function is allegedly the unavoidable condition of "mineness" attaching itself to all acts of cognition. However, the "form–matter" distinction deployed here by Kant still remains unclear.

Later on in the same text, Kant refers to the unity of the split subject of self-consciousness as a formal unity. But, the timeless "I" is precisely what provides the formal unity of noumenal and phenomenal subjectivity. This surprisingly resembles a typical Hegelian move—for example, where the Universal is the result of the unity of the Universal and the Particular, doubling itself in fulfilling its true function; or, put in hybrid Kantian–Hegelian terms, noumenal *Geist* only recovers itself in its unifying universality through alienating itself in phenomenal history:[19]

> Experience is empirical cognition, but cognition (dependent as it is on judgments) requires reflection (*reflexio*) and consequently consciousness of activity in arranging the multitude of ideas according to a rule of unity, that is, a concept; and, finally, it requires thought as such (which makes it different from sense perception). On this account consciousness is divided into the discursive (which, being logical, must take the lead because it provides the rule) and intuitive consciousness. Discursive consciousness (the pure apperception of its mental activity) is simple. The 'I' of reflection contains no manifold within itself, and is always one and the same in every consciousness. On the other hand, inner experience contains the material of itself as well as a manifold of the empirical, inner perception, that is, the 'I' of apprehension (hence an empirical apperception). (Kant 1978, 26)

For Kant, formally speaking, "I," as a subject, am one and the same unity—the "I" of pure, reflective apperception is "simple," containing nothing empirical from the manifold of intuition. The problem is that the "I" can never experience itself as this ipseity. Since inner sense is the a priori mediating temporal matrix of self-consciousness, the pure "I"—reflective, simple, discursive, and so on—is permanently inaccessible as an object of experience. Time transforms this "I" into a *Ding an sich:*

> I, as a thinking being and as a being endowed with senses, am one and the same subject. However, as an object of inner empirical intuition, so far as I am inwardly affected by temporal sensations (simultaneous or successive), I cognize myself only as I appear to myself, not as a thing-in-itself. Such cognition depends on a temporal condition which is no concept of the understanding (hence not mere spontaneity), and hence is a

> condition in regard to which my faculty of ideas is passive. It is a condition that belongs to receptivity. Therefore, through inner experience I always know myself only as I appear to myself. (Kant 1978, 26–27)

If "I always know myself only as I appear to myself," and if time as an a priori pure form of intuition necessarily subtends all appearances of subjective cognition, then only the temporal, phenomenal dimension of subjectivity is accessible. Consequently, the timeless "I" is an inherent blind spot for self-consciousness. This ideal ipseity is an unknowable "x"—as unknowable as any external *Ding an sich* supposedly lying behind what consciousness grasps as *ein Objekt*.[20]

P. F. Strawson develops one potential consequence of Kant's treatment of formal/noumenal subjectivity as a thing-in-itself—a consequence not in obvious accord with Kant's own thoughts. For Strawson, if both external things (the in-itself level behind object-appearances) and the subject per se are unknowable noumena, then there is no way to be absolutely certain that the subject is different-in-kind from inert, inanimate things; that is to say, no justification exists for using personal pronouns to designate noumenal subjectivity in contradistinction from neutral pronouns used in reference to inert noumenal "things":[21]

> Why, if the character of the noumenal is completely unknown, does Kant speak, on the one hand, of outer objects as *they* are in themselves and, on the other, of ourselves as *we* are in ourselves? Is it at least known that the field of the noumenal contains two distinct types of existence? An at least partially Kantian answer to this question might go as follows. Nothing of the kind is known. It is just that within experience (the field of appearances) a distinction is drawn, without which experience would be impossible, between perceived objects of outer sense (bodies in space) and the successive experiences which human beings count as states of themselves . . . Now the general dependence of both bodies in space and inner states of ourselves on the noumenal unknown is expressed by describing both the former, in relation to the latter, as 'appearances' of 'things as they are in themselves.' Hence it becomes natural to speak, on the one hand, of outer objects as *they* are in themselves and, on the other, of ourselves as *we* are in ourselves. But this way of speaking reflects nothing more than the distinction which is drawn, and must be drawn, in experience, between outer objects and states of consciousness. It implies no knowledge of any distinction between types of noumenal existence. For all we know the noumenal may be quite homogenous. (Strawson 1966, 172)

Strawson's cautious appraisal of Kant's treatment of the subject—in problematizing the ability to distinguish between active, inner consciousness and static, outer things at the noumenal level, Strawson implicitly indicts larger portions of Kantian epistemology and its attendant theory of subjectivity—suggests that Kant be read as an anti-humanist *avant la lettre.* The "true essence" of the subject, hidden beneath the veil of appearances, might be nothing more than a "thing," unrecognizable in being divested of all anthropomorphic features. The Lacanian handling of the subject could easily be aligned with Strawson's interpretation precisely by showing that Lacan transforms the timeless heart of subjective structure into an unknowable *Ding an sich;* Heidegger, on the other hand, concludes that "subjectivity" (as *Dasein*) is distinctive by virtue of its thoroughly temporal character—inner sense, and not anything noumenal, distinguishes subjectivity.

A troubling question arises: Couldn't the pure "I" simply be something on the level of what Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* calls a "necessary illusion"?[22] Of course, reason insists that there must be a single subject as the unifying locus of the manifold of disparate, temporalized, empirical experiences. Since an "I think" implicitly accompanies each and every "I think $x^1$, $x^2$, $x^3$ . . ."—and since only the cognized contents appear to change, that is, the "x"s—the "I" of the "I think" is necessarily presupposed to be a simple unity binding together this aggregate of experience. (Similarly, Strawson warns of the erroneous extrapolation from the awareness of the necessary, a priori unity of conscious experience to the assumption that one is thereby aware of consciousness as a unity.)[23] But, given that such an "I" lies well beyond the limits of possible experience, definitively deciding whether it's a "thing" behind its appearances or merely an illusory assumption foisted on the human mind by the insistent recurrence of the simple presentation "I think" is impossible. To do so, Kant would have to violate his own rules by exceeding the very epistemological limits painstakingly outlined in his critical project.

Before proceeding to the *Critique of Pure Reason,* one last passage from Kant's *Anthropology* deserves mention. Kant alleges that the primary error of psychology lies in its conflation of inner sense and apperception. In other words, psychology erroneously equivocates between the empirical/phenomenal and transcendental facets of subjectivity:

> The cause of these errors lies in the fact that the terms *inner sense* and *apperception* are generally considered synonymous by psychologists, although inner sense should designate only psychological (applied) consciousness, while apperception should designate logical (pure) consciousness. From this it is evident that the only perception we have of

> ourselves by means of the inner sense is of how we appear to ourselves, because apprehension (*apprehensio*) of impressions of the inner sense presupposes a formal condition of the inner perception of a subject. The condition is Time, which certainly is not a concept of the understanding. It is merely a subjective condition by which inner sensations are given to us in consequence of the nature of the human soul. Thus it is not without our power to know what an object is in itself. (Kant 1978, 27)

Hence, Kant claims that psychology, as the empirical investigation of the phenomenal "I," must restrict itself to statements about the empirical ego. Without recognizing such distinctions as intuition versus understanding, phenomenal versus noumenal, and apprehension versus reflection, psychology is, according to Kant, bound to fall into error. But, as will be argued subsequently, the Lacanian recasting of psychoanalysis—the structural de-psychologization of the unconscious—takes into account this Kantian criticism while simultaneously asserting that psychoanalysis is, at root, not a form of psychology.

## §13 The Critical Role of Time and Subjectivity

One of the primary values of the *Anthropology*'s account of subjectivity is the direct link it exhibits between time and the splitting of the subject. In the *Critique of Pure Reason,* this link is stretched across various moments in a vast, complex textual apparatus. The "Transcendental Aesthetic" (with its notion of temporal inner sense) and the "Transcendental Deduction" (with the transcendental unity of apperception playing the role of timeless "I") establish an implicit contrast between two modes of subjectivity—phenomenal (the temporalized subject of experience) versus formal or "noumenal" (the atemporal subject). Viewing the split between the twofold natures of the Kantian "I" as an "antinomy of subjectivity," the "Paralogisms of Pure Reason" can be seen to function above all as a certain sort of resolution of this antinomy.

The "Transcendental Aesthetic" already contains the seeds of the subsequent treatments of time and subjectivity presented in the later portions of the "Transcendental Dialectic." Kant delineates two pure forms of intuition—space and time. Any determinate presentation, insofar as it is a presentation for the subject, must conform to these two a priori forms governing the appearance of phenomena within the manifold of perception. But, these forms are not on the same level as each other; space is

dubbed "outer sense," and time is, of course, inner sense. For Kant, some perceptions occur as a matter of outer sense—perceptions of extended objects "outside of" the subject's mental consciousness/cognition. However, all perceptions, whether occurring as outer or inner sense, must conform to the laws of succession and/or simultaneity—that is, the basic structures of time. For example, at this juncture, Kant argues that the spatial intuition of an object's motion is subordinate to the a priori form of time, which enables successive changes of place to be intuited.[24]

Kant's *Anthropology* already establishes the connection between time and the problem of self-consciousness: All self-representations necessarily conform to the temporal character of inner sense, and hence fail to apprehend directly the atemporal dimension of subjectivity making possible all temporalized acts of cognition. Once again, in the "Transcendental Aesthetic," Kant returns to this point. To begin with, time is the pure form of intuition to which inner sense corresponds. Furthermore, inner sense is the medium through which self-consciousness unavoidably passes—"Time is nothing but the form of inner sense, i.e., of the intuiting we do of ourselves and of our inner state" (Kant 1996, 88 [A 33/B 49]).[25] Kant goes on to remind his readers that time, as a form of intuition—and not, therefore, as one intuition among others—has a reality at the level of the formal framework mediating experience, but is not constitutive of an ontological entity in any stronger sense:

> Now changes are possible only in time. Therefore time is something actual. There is no difficulty in replying to the objection. I concede the whole argument. Time is indeed something actual, viz., the actual form of inner intuition. It therefore has subjective reality in regard to inner experience; i.e., I actually have the presentation of time and of my determinations in time. Hence time is to be regarded as actual, though not as an object but as the way of presenting that I myself have as an object. (Kant 1996, 91 [A 37/B 53–54])

With his typical critical idealist caution, Kant avoids transforming a formal structure of subjectivity applicable strictly to subjective experience into a constitutive assertion generalized at an ontological or metaphysical level. Time, in its ideality, applies solely to possible experiences for a subject. Kant continues:

> Suppose, on the other hand, that I could intuit myself without being subject to this condition of sensibility, or that another being could so intuit me; in that case the very same determinations that we now present as changes would provide a cognition in which the presentation of time,

> and hence also that of change, would not occur at all. Hence time retains its empirical reality as condition of all our experiences. Only absolute reality must, by the reasons adduced above, be denied to time. Time is nothing but the form of our inner intuition. If we take away from time [the qualification that it is] the special condition of our sensibility, then the concept of time vanishes as well; time attaches not to objects themselves, but merely to the subject intuiting them. (Kant 1996, 91 [A 37–38/B 54])

What is time? For Kant, its only reality is to be an intrinsic part of the structure of the subject's cognizing/experiential template. Time applies "not to objects themselves"—neither the *Ding an sich* nor the pure, transcendental "I" conforms to the temporal conditions of subjective experience—but "merely to the subject intuiting them," that is, time is a feature of intuited objects insofar as they conform to the requisite subjective conditions for the occurrence of intuitions.

With the above arguments in mind, Kant then lays the foundations for his critique of Descartes and rational psychology. Toward the end of the "Transcendental Aesthetic," Kant confronts the reader with the familiar distinction between "object" (*Objekt*) and "thing" (*Ding*): The subject only ever encounters "objects" constituted by the transcendental structure of subjective cognition, while the "things" beyond the object-appearances (things-in-themselves) remain forever inaccessible. Kant draws a connection between this distinction and the problem of self-consciousness:

> Now through mere relations we do not, of course, cognize a thing in itself. Hence our judgment must surely be this: since through outer sense we are given nothing but mere relational presentations, outer sense can, by the same token, contain in its presentation only the relation of an object to the subject, but not the intrinsic character belonging to the object in itself. The same applies to inner intuition. For not only does the proper material in it, with which we occupy our mind, consist in presentations of *outer senses;* but the time in which we place these presentations, and which itself precedes the consciousness of them in experience and underlies, as formal condition, the way in which we place them within the mind, already contains relations: of succession, of simultaneity, and of what is simultaneous with succession (the permanent). Now, presentation that can precede all acts of thinking anything is intuition; and if this intuition contains nothing but relations then it is the form of intuition. But this form does not present anything except insofar as something is being placed within the mind. Therefore this form can be nothing but the way in which the mind is affected by its own activity—

> and hence affected by itself; i.e., it is an inner sense insofar as that sense's form is concerned. Whatever is presented through a sense is, to that extent, always appearance. (Kant 1996, 99–100 [B 67–68])

This passage establishes a transition from thing versus object to subject as condition of possibility for self-consciousness versus subject as subjectivity conceived via the activity of self-consciousness (the phenomenal "I" as mere appearance).[26] Kant continues:

> Hence either we must not grant that there is an inner sense at all; or we must grant that the subject who is the object of this sense can be presented through it only as appearance, and not as he would judge himself if his intuition were self-activity only, i.e., if it were intellectual intuition. What underlies this whole difficulty is this: how can a subject inwardly intuit himself? But this difficulty is shared by every theory . . . The consciousness of oneself (apperception) is the simple presentation of the *I* . . . If the power to become conscious of oneself is to locate (apprehend) what lies in the mind, then it must affect the mind; and only in that way can it produce an intuition of itself. But the form of this intuition lies at the basis beforehand in the mind; and this form determines, in the presentation of time, the way in which the manifold is [placed] together in the mind. And thus this power does not intuit itself as it would if it presented itself directly and self-actively; rather, it intuits itself according to the way in which it is affected from within, and hence intuits itself as it appears to itself, not as it is. (Kant 1996, 100–101 [B 68–69])

The "whole difficulty" addressed by this quotation is the problem of self-consciousness—"consciousness of oneself." In contemplating one's own subjectivity, one isolates the "simple presentation of the *I*" that either implicitly or explicitly accompanies all experiences and/or acts of cognition. Perhaps one even hypothetically suspends all the possible accompanying perceptions (all of the "x"s in "I think $x^1$, $x^2$, $x^3$ . . ."); one might thus believe that the "pure 'I'" has been apprehended adequately. But, Kant maintains, such is not the case. This "simple presentation," as a presentation per se—thus, as conforming to the formal conditions governing the possibility of any and every presentation—is a determinate presentation molded by, at a minimum, the pure form of intuition qua temporal inner sense. Therefore, no matter what contortions undergone by self-consciousness, the transcendental "I" cannot experience itself "as it is," but only "as it appears to itself." The subjective "thing" is permanently eclipsed by the ego-object of self-consciousness.

Nonetheless, in the "Transcendental Deduction," Kant highlights

an aspect of self-consciousness that should not be ignored by any account of it: Despite its fluctuating nature, inner sense has a certain degree of continuity. Although all one's perceptions are submitted to the rules of simultaneity or succession, there is still an apparently invariable "mineness" to all perceptions of inner sense—he calls this a "unity of intuition."[27] Kant continues to grant that (re)presentations obey temporal inner sense.[28] But, he refuses to submerge subjectivity entirely within this experiential flux. The elucidation of the transcendental unity of apperception in the "Transcendental Deduction" attests to Kant's rigorous insistence on subjectivity as inherently, structurally dehiscent (although, as dehiscent, this subject is neither purely timeless nor entirely temporal).

Kant reiterates that "consciousness of oneself" yields no self-unity or ipseity, since every representation of the self is submitted to the formal constraints that rule the unfolding of inner sense.[29] Despite this restriction—a restriction valid for the faculty of intuition—a binding unification of the flux of inner sense is always–already necessary given the manner in which human thought functions; this unification makes for the difference between a subject that merely "intuits" and a subject that "thinks."[30] Kant uses the example of counting: In order to accomplish the act of counting, the subject must have a capacity for retention and protention (to borrow Husserl's language) that itself is not simply lost in the successions of moments within the manifold of perception. That is, an "intellectual space," so to speak, unites disparate temporal moments in its constant activity. (Besides counting, Kant also uses the experience of motion as demonstrative of the necessity for an a priori synthesis of intuitions.)[31] In the early part of the A version of the "Transcendental Deduction," Kant calls this intellectual space within which various points of intuition are always–already synthesized "transcendental apperception."[32]

In the A version, Kant describes "this constant and enduring *I*"—that is, the pure, nonempirical subject of understanding qua transcendental apperception—as the "correlate of all our presentations."[33] However, the word "correlate" seems risky. The pure "I" shouldn't be read as simply one very special presentation, a presentation that iterates itself alongside other presentations occurring in the manifold of intuition. If this were the case, then Kant could not conclude as to the atemporal unity of transcendental apperception—such unity would be a mirage engendered by the iteration of the simple presentation "I." The B version rectifies this potential problem. Kant clarifies his position by stipulating an implicit difference between the presentation of the "I think" accompanying all other presentations and what makes this iterated presentation possible in the first place. He writes:

> The *I think* must be *capable* of accompanying all my presentations. For otherwise something would be presented to me that could not be thought at all—which is equivalent to saying that the presentation either would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me. Presentation that can be given prior to all thought is called *intuition*. Hence everything manifold in intuition has a necessary reference to the *I think* in the same subject in whom this manifold is found. But this presentation [i.e., the *I think*] is an act of spontaneity; i.e., it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. I call it *pure apperception,* in order to distinguish it from *empirical* apperception. Or, again, I call it *original apperception;* for it is the self-consciousness which, because it produces the presentation *I think* that must be capable of accompanying all other presentations [,] and [because it] is one and the same in all consciousness, cannot be accompanied by any further presentation. I also call the *unity* of this apperception the *transcendental* unity of self-consciousness . . . (Kant 1996, 177 [B 132–133])

The "I think" that accompanies all other presentations cognized by the subject is, admittedly, also a presentation. As a privileged presentation—that is, as the avatar of the unity of subjective cognition—this "I think" is the common point of reference for the field of intuition. Kant reminds the reader, however, that just as a difference exists between the pure forms of intuition and the presentations arising within the field of empirical experience made possible by these a priori formal structures, so too does a difference exist between the "transcendental unity of self-consciousness" and the presentation of this same unity as the simple (re)presentation "I think." Even though "self-consciousness . . . produces the presentation *I think,*" consciousness *an sich* is nevertheless not a presentation, and hence remains inaccessible to a self-consciousness that unavoidably passes through the defiles of possible experience.[34] Kant subsequently makes this point quite forcefully:

> [I]f concerning the determinations of the outer senses we grant that we cognize objects through them only insofar as we are outwardly affected, then we must also concede concerning inner sense that we intuit ourselves through it only as we are inwardly affected *by ourselves;* i.e., we must concede that, as far as inner intuition is concerned, our own [self as] subject is cognized by us only as appearance, but not in terms of what it is in itself. (Kant 1996, 194–195 [B 156])

Kant insists that the transcendental subject indeed must exist if human experience is to take the shape that it does, that is, that the temporal flux of

inner sense is always–already meaningfully combined and synthesized by the activity of the understanding. And yet, this unity, as transcendental—that is, conditioning the possibility of all determinate manifestations under it—necessarily remains absolutely beyond the reach of every particular instance of self-consciousness occurring within the limits of possible experience.[35] Since this dimension of the "I" makes possible self-consciousness, self-consciousness cannot step back behind itself to grasp its condition of emergence. In declaring that, "our own [self as] subject is cognized by us only as appearance, but not in terms of what it is in itself," Kant renders this transcendent(al) formal subjectivity equivalent to the *Ding an sich.* This gap between the phenomenal "I," resulting from a self-consciousness routed through inner sense, and what might be called the pure "I," underlying said self-consciousness, is the explicit focus of the "Paralogisms of Pure Reason."

Kant alleges that Descartes—and the tradition of "rational psychology" as well—commits a hypostatization fallacy. When addressing the subject–object dichotomy in terms of a split between two types of "substance" (thinking substance versus extended substance), Descartes dangerously equivocates between two entirely different levels unjustifiably placed under the single umbrella "substance" (*res*). Descartes thereby leans toward substantializing the *Cogito,* a substantialization that exceeds the limits of possible experience in transforming the subject (that is, the transcendental condition of all cognition of substance) into one substance among others.[36] The Kantian *Cogito,* which Kant calls the "transcendental subject of thoughts = x," must not be understood as substance, soul, or any other species of metaphysical entity—"the proposition *I think* . . . is not taken insofar as it may contain a perception of an existent (the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum*); the proposition is taken, rather, in terms of its mere possibility" (Kant 1996, 386 [A 347/B 405]).

Not only is the Kantian subject not an intuition—a self-image, a representation of the "I," the iterable presentation "I think," and so on—but Kant goes so far as to claim that it is not even a "concept." Instead, this subject is simply the consciousness subtending both empirical intuitions and the concepts of the understanding. Speaking of any "science of thinking subjectivity," Kant warns:

> [W]e can lay at the basis of this science nothing but the simple, and by itself quite empty, presentation *I,* of which we cannot even say that it is a concept, but only that it is a mere consciousness accompanying all concepts. Now through this *I* or *he* or *it* (the thing) that thinks, nothing more is presented than a transcendental subject of thoughts = x. This subject is cognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and

> apart from them we can never have the least concept of it; hence we revolve around it in a constant circle, since in order to make any judgement regarding it we must always already make use of its presentation. This is an inconvenience that cannot be separated from it, because consciousness in itself is not so much a presentation distinguishing a particular object, as rather a form of presentation as such insofar as this presentation is to be called cognition . . . (Kant 1996, 385 [A 346/B 404])

This passage condenses the entire thrust of the paralogisms. Kant first describes the ultimately unknowable character of transcendental subjectivity as "this *I* or *he* or *it* (the thing) that thinks" (here, through the use of the pronoun "it," he seemingly embraces the anti-humanistic consequences of noumenal subjectivity as remarked upon by Strawson). And, as Kant indicates, any cognition of one's own subjectivity, which is a fairly straightforward definition of self-consciousness, unavoidably occurs as a series of determinate instances of cognition ("This subject is cognized only through the thoughts that are its predicates, and apart from them we can never have the least concept of it"). Kant emphasizes that this "failure" of self-consciousness is inherent to the very structure of subjectivity ("we revolve around it in a constant circle, since in order to make any judgement regarding it we must always already make use of its presentation").

Elsewhere, in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics,* Kant notes that this gap intrinsic to the nature of self-consciousness, although posing a limit to the introspective ambitions of such consciousness, is not to be taken as a deplorable shortcoming. Instead, he maintains, what seems truly unreasonable is the insistence on being able to know conscious subjectivity as if it were an object of the same kind as other tangible objects:

> People have long since observed that in all substances the subject proper, that which remains after all the accidents (as predicates) are abstracted, consequently the *substantial,* remains unknown, and various complaints have been made concerning these limits to our knowledge. But it will be well to consider that the human understanding is not to be blamed for its inability to know the substance of things—that is, to determine it by itself—but rather for demanding definitely to know substance, which is a mere Idea, as though it were a given object. (Kant 1950, 81 [§46])

Kant demands that future theories of subjectivity rest content with the ineliminable presence of this rift by virtue of which the timeless, noumenal dimension of the subject remains as unknowable as any external thing-in-itself.[37] Implicit here is the notion that the Cartesian *Cogito* must be di-

vorced from the *ergo sum* whereby this subject "out of joint" with the rest of the ontological order is inappropriately transformed into a hypostatized substance-entity.

Ultimately, the problem of the paralogisms is a recurring motif in the work of Kant. The Kantian subject is basically split along a form–content divide: The transcendental subject is the formal possibility condition for consciousness, whereas the phenomenal subject is that which is made possible by the transcendental form. So, no conscious subject can have direct knowledge of its transcendental side, since to have such knowledge would mean that it stepped back behind itself as conscious in order to directly apprehend the very conditions for the emergence and functioning of this same consciousness.[38] As in the psychoanalytic notion of the fundamental fantasy centered on the primal scene, one cannot witness one's own conception.[39] Similarly, consciousness cannot adequately cognize the conditions making possible every act of cognition:

> For the constant logical subject of thought is passed off by it as the cognition of the real subject of the inherence of thought. With this real subject we are not, and cannot be, in the least acquainted. For consciousness alone is what turns all presentations into thoughts, and hence solely in it as the transcendental subject must all perceptions be found; and apart from this logical meaning of the *I* we are not acquainted with the subject in itself that, as substratum, underlies this *I* as it underlies all thoughts . . . this concept therefore designates a substance only in idea, but not in reality. (Kant 1996, 389 [A 350–351])

Where has this "constant logical subject of thought" been touched upon previously? In Kant's *Anthropology,* it apparently goes by several names—logical "I," reflective "I," subject of thinking, and pure apperception. In the "Transcendental Deduction," it receives the title "transcendental unity of apperception," and is treated as the "I" proper to understanding (as opposed to the "I" of inner sense, situated at the level of intuition). However, Kant now seems to suggest that the ipseity of the "I" as a noumenal subject be treated at the level of the faculty of reason. More specifically, in saying that, "this concept therefore designates a substance only in idea," Kant alludes to its status as a regulative idea with no constitutive potential ("but not in reality").[40]

If the timeless self-sameness of the noumenal subject is merely a regulative idea, then how can Kant even presuppose its existence as analogous with *das Ding*? Is a regulative idea restricted simply from constituting a metaphysical *Objekt*—an "object" of some strange sort of possible experience—thus still being allowed to refer to the potential presence of an

intelligible *Ding an sich*? Resolving these questions is of capital importance for apprehending the status of the Kantian subject. In the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic," in the section "On the Final Aim of the Natural Dialectic of Human Reason," Kant provides a few clues as to possible answers. He reminds his readers that the regulative maxims of reason serve only to provide a systematic unity to the specific applications of human rationality within the empirical field. By no means should they ever be taken in a constitutive sense.[41] And, the "psychological" is identified as one of these transcendental ideas acting at the behest of reason's aim of unifying and rendering consistent human knowledge. As such, the idea of the subject as a simple, singular, and enduring ipseity is nothing more than a regulative principle:

> [W]e shall, by the guidance of inner experience, connect all appearances, actions, and receptivity of our mind *as if* this mind were a simple substance that (at least in life) exists permanently and with personal identity, while its states—to which the body's states belong only as external conditions—vary continually. (Kant 1996, 640 [A 672/B 700])

The strongest claim that can be made about the timeless, noumenal "I" is an "as if" claim. ("I know full well that I cannot experience myself as a transcendental subject, but nonetheless . . ." The psychological version of the transcendental idea echoes Octave Mannoni's encapsulation of fetishistic logic as "*Je sais bien, mais quand même.*")[42] In order to provide coherence to the fabric of conscious experience, one must assume the existence of something correlative to the transcendental unity of apperception. Kant continues:

> [W]e cannot be permitted—on the mere trust of a speculative reason that likes to complete its business—to introduce as actual and determinate objects what are only thought-beings that surpass all our concepts, although such beings do so without contradicting any of these concepts. Hence these [things] are not to be assumed in themselves, but the reality of these [ideas] is to be assumed to hold only as the reality of a schema for the regulative principle of systematic unity of all cognition of nature; and hence these [things] are to be laid at the basis only as analogues of actual things, but not as in themselves actual things. (Kant 1996, 641–642 [A 673–674/B 701–702])

Thus, the transcendental subject is not a *Ding an sich,* but merely analogous to this intelligible thing (insofar as one's finite perspective from this side of the limits of possible experience is concerned).[43] Now, the under-

standing requires that, accompanying every intuition, there is also an "I think." This "I think" is an iterated condition of all acts of consciousness involving the comprehension of the manifold of intuition. In the paralogisms, Kant acknowledges that the simple presentation "I" accompanying all acts of consciousness is not proof of a permanent ipseity behind the flux of experience. Iterability isn't necessarily indicative of a continuous, constant identity underlying the repeated accompaniments of this single presentation "I." So, reason is the faculty responsible for extrapolating from the iterable subject of understanding to the self-sameness of the timeless subject proper. In the end, this extrapolation must remain no more than a perpetual, persistent (and, perhaps, illusory) hypothesis.

What would happen if this subjective "as if" were suspended? In the "Transcendental Deduction," Kant puts it simply—"For otherwise I would have a self as many-colored and varied as I have presentations that I am conscious of" (Kant 1996, 179 [B 134]). Of course, in proposing that there is a certain unity or coherence to consciousness, Kant is being justifiably responsive in his descriptions to the basic nature of human experience. For a conscious subject, it at least seems as if the disparate moments of phenomenal, actual consciousness must belong to one and the same self. But, especially in light of Kant's critical turn, this ideal unity, although demanded by reason, lies beyond the limits of possible experience.[44]

Kant's resolution of the recurrent antinomy of subjectivity works like the other resolutions put forward in the section on the "Antinomies of Pure Reason": The appropriate domains of the phenomenal and noumenal are assessed, and each is assigned its proper place. Phenomenal and noumenal do not designate an opposition between two terms of the same order, but a difference-in-kind. Regarding subjectivity, its "twofold" nature (as Kant phrases it in the *Anthropology*) is divided along the lines of this general duality. As far as self-consciousness within the limits of possible experience is concerned, the atemporal ipseity of subjectivity can never be grasped directly. Every (re)presentation of the self is conditioned by time as the pure form of intuition, as inner sense. Self-consciousness is limited to apprehending the phenomenal subject. Midway between intuition and reason, the understanding necessitates an iterable "I" accompanying every determinate act of cognition. (The transcendental unity of apperception isn't just the empty logical ipseity of the pure "I," but is the indefinitely repeated act of unifying the manifold of perception according to the concepts of the understanding.)[45] From this iterability, reason, in accordance with the transcendental idea of the psychological unity of subjectivity, treats the iterable "I" of the understanding as indicative of the need for a regulative principle of a timeless self-sameness. This is nothing other than the purely noumenal subject, a sub-

ject that must be posited given the systematic aspirations of the interests of reason, although no experiential correlate can ever be adequate to this idea.

Heidegger insists, implicitly rejecting the systematic interests of reason and its "as if" transcendental idea of the atemporal unity of the "I," that the Kantian subject is a thoroughly temporal subject. Bergson, for instance, anticipates Heidegger in claiming that one cannot resolve the tension between the existence of a timeless ego (as epitomized by the transcendental unity of apperception) and the subject's experience of duration (the phenomenological qualities of the "flux of inner sense").[46] As per the phenomenological stance of rejecting noumena, Bergson asserts that, "as regards the psychic life unfolding beneath the symbols which conceal it, we readily perceive that time is just the stuff it is made of" (Bergson 1944, 6). Duration colors conscious experience. Therefore, temporal duration is the most fundamental reality of human experience.

Bergson's rejection of Kantian subjectivity suffers from similar weaknesses as its later postmodern variants. Kant himself never once asserts that the noumenal subject "exists"—as an ontological and/or perceptual entity—or that this "I" is intended to philosophically account for phenomenal experience. Kant's point, whose radicality exceeds Bergson by far, is that the essence of subjectivity is not decided on an either/or basis; it isn't a matter of either a timeless "I" or a temporal self. The deadlock of the antinomy tacitly mobilized by Bergson in his criticisms of the noumenal subject is easily resolved by understanding the necessity and advantages of preserving the split nature of self-consciousness, instead of quickly proclaiming the subject to be nothing more than the pure flux of *durée.* (This move runs right into the problem addressed by the "Transcendental Deduction," namely, how to explain the syntheses of the understanding achieved within and in spite of the fluctuations of intuition.)

Heidegger, with a bit more nuance, basically repeats the Bergsonian gesture. In his 1929 lecture course entitled *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* he draws upon his 1927 portrayal of the subject as *Dasein,* contained in the second division of *Being and Time:* The uniqueness of human subjectivity lies in its thoroughly temporal character (this point also recurs in the 1928 lectures *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*).[47] As noted via Strawson, one cannot have definitive knowledge of a difference-in-kind between subjects/selves and things at the noumenal level. From within the constraints of possible experience, the noumenal "I" is as much a *Ding an sich* as anything external. (As Lacan might express it, this "I" is "extimate," an alien interiority, an inner foreignness). Since noumenality fails to provide distinguishing features of *Dasein* over-and-against ontic beings/entities, Heidegger concludes that the distinguishing feature of

Kantian self-consciousness is its temporal self-affection via inner sense.[48] He writes:

> Inner sense does not receive 'from without,' but rather from the self. In pure taking-in-stride, the inner affection must come forth from out of the pure self; i.e., it must be formed in the essence of selfhood as such, and therefore it must constitute this self in the first place. Pure self-affection provides the transcendental, primal structure of the finite self as such. (Heidegger 1990, 134)

Elsewhere, Heidegger articulates it thus:

> Time is pure original receptivity and original spontaneity. Original temporality is that in which the primal activity of the self and its *concern with the self* is grounded. And it is the same temporality which at any time makes possible a *self-identification* of the self. (Heidegger 1997, 267)

How can Heidegger assert that "time makes possible a *self-identification* of the self" when all of Kant's emphasis dictates the exact opposite? Isn't Kant's aim to show how time thwarts the successful reflective identification sought by self-consciousness? This is hardly an exposition of Kant's position. Kant certainly concedes that time is an a priori form belonging to the structure of the experiencing subject. But, simply because this pure form of intuition affects each and every representation occurring for the self doesn't mean that the self is therefore identical to time.

Heidegger then proceeds to criticize Kant for running the risk of treating the "I" as "something extant." Heidegger accuses Kant of the very hypostatization that the latter so carefully avoids:

> It is this transposition of the self into itself as stretched in all dimensions of temporality which constitutes the genuine existential concept of identification of the self. By contrast in Kant this self-identification happens to be dubiously close to an objective identification with itself of something extant. The only difference is that in the case of the 'I' this extant being identifies *itself by itself out of itself,* as it were something extant which is equipped with the apparatus of a self-consciousness. However . . . Kant . . . still does not succeed in grasping the *self-identification as an originally historical phenomenon* . . . In dealing with the problematic of self-identification, Kant comes dangerously close to Descartes' *res cogitans.* In spite of all the difference from Descartes in conceiving the spontaneity of the 'I,' Kant here takes the 'I' as something that thinks and thus can come upon itself any time as this thinking thing. The selfhood of the self

> is not understood in terms of the full temporal extension of Dasein. (Heidegger 1997, 268)

Perhaps Heidegger's criticisms would hold on a relatively restrictive reading of the "Transcendental Deduction" alone. However, as soon as one assesses the unity of Kantian subjectivity as merely an "as if" regulative idea of reason, with no constitutive resonances at all (not even constitutive of a subjective *Ding an sich*), then the critique collapses.[49] Kant would categorically refute each and every claim advanced by Heidegger: One, self-identification is not "originally temporal" since time is precisely that which thwarts such identification; two, there is no self-identification in terms of the thinking thing reflectively encountering itself as an extant thinking being (this is impossible for Kant); three, the "originally historical" aspect of identification latched onto by Heidegger is admitted by Kant, given that the determinate nature of historicized, phenomenal self-consciousness is the constraint necessitating the irrevocable loss or barring of the noumenal "I."

What is responsible for generating the unsurpassable gap, incapable of convenient erasure by phenomenology, within the very heart of subjectivity? Time itself is the "cause" of this dehiscence (this being the sole means of recuperating the Heideggerian emphasis on temporality in the interpretation of Kant). Because self-consciousness is forced to vainly attempt an apprehension of itself through the mediation of temporal inner sense, and because reason can only exceed intuition in a regulative and not a constitutive fashion, the noumenal "I" remains intrinsically out of reach. Žižek writes:

> [F]or Kant, self-consciousness is not only hindered by the absence of the Cartesian Theater—quite on the contrary, it emerges as an empty logical function *because* there is no Cartesian Theater, no direct phenomenal self-acquaintance of the subject. There is subject *qua* $ insofar as (and because) the subject is not directly accessible to himself, because (as Kant put it) I cannot ever know what I am in my noumenal dimension, as the 'Thing that thinks'. . . what if 'subject' is nothing but the void, the gap, opened up by the failure of reflection? What if all the figures of positive self-acquaintance are just so many 'fillers' of this primordial gap? Every recognition of the subject, in an image or a signifying trait (in short: every identification), already betrays its core; every jubilant 'That's me!' already contains the seed of 'That's *not* me!' However, what if, far from consisting in some substantial kernel of identity, inaccessible to reflective recuperation, the subject (as distinct from substance) emerges in this very movement of the failure of identification? (Žižek 1998b, 263–264)

Žižek succinctly connects the preceding reflections on Kant with a plethora of Lacanian themes: *Sujet* versus *moi* (the ego is the phenomenal, objectival residue of the subject of the unconscious); the subject of enunciation versus the subject of the utterance (the subject of enunciation is irreducible to the chains of determinate signifiers which it sets in motion); and the tension between "I think where I am not" and "I am not where I think" (the transcendental thinking subject qua *Cogito* is inaccessible to the conscious experience of the ego's self-aware "I"). It is not really Descartes who informs and underpins the Lacanian theory of subjectivity. Even if the Lacan of the 1960s is right that the Cartesian subject is the historical possibility condition for the emergence of subjectivity as per Freudian metapsychology, the Kantian subject is undeniably the key herald of the structurally split subject of Lacanian psychoanalysis. When Žižek and others identify the *Cogito* as the "subject of the unconscious," they are actually retroactively recuperating this *Cogito* through Kant's critical apparatus and its refinements of Cartesian themes.

## §14 Subjectivity in the Wake of Kant

Why speak of Kant in a project centered on psychoanalytic theory? Doesn't analysis challenge the very basis of transcendental philosophy? Isn't the purity of the transcendental subject irreversibly exchanged for a pathological psyche driven by libidinal forces and contingent experiences? This is indeed the common wisdom about Freud's relationship to modern philosophy—"Whether or not Freud saw himself as directly influenced by Kant, it is clear that he viewed psychoanalysis as contesting many of Kant's claims" (Cutrofello 1997, 5). Cutrofello then identifies the notion of "genesis" as the key thematic distinguishing Freudian metapsychology from transcendental philosophy. (Žižek similarly asserts that the primacy of the *tuché* of the Real in the later Lacan distances Lacanian theory from Kantian philosophy.) Psychoanalysis reveals the illusory nature of seemingly transcendental subjectivity, displaying instead the processes leading to the emergence of this illusion (for example, how the ipseity of consciousness is constructed rather than "ready-made").[50]

To begin with, as argued contra Žižek, the genetic dimension of metapsychology does not result in a strict opposition between psychoanalysis and transcendental philosophy. In actuality, metapsychology attempts to outline the structural possibility conditions for the genesis of subjectivity. As such, it simply displaces the level at which questions about transcendental mechanisms are to be pursued—from the always–already given subject to the dynamics conditioning the emergence of a genetic

subject (as in Lacan's "logical genesis of the 'I'" from 1946). Cutrofello assumes that the genetic and the transcendental are mutually exclusive—"More in the tradition of Hume than of Kant, I claim, Lacan could be said to take the central questions of critique to be genetic rather than transcendental ones" (Cutrofello 1997, 8). These two poles are far from being incompatible: Lacan's entire oeuvre can be read as a quest for a genetic transcendental system.

Secondly, although probably of marginal importance, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* remarks that both the subject and the object are constituted through childhood experiences. Even Kant is loath to maintain that the subjectivity described in the critical works is implanted, so to speak, as fully functional in human beings from the moment of birth. Regarding the emergence of subjectivity, Kant observes:

> It is noteworthy, however, that the child who already speaks fairly well begins to use the pronoun *I* rather late (perhaps after a year), in the meantime speaking of himself in the third person ('Carl wants to eat, go, . . .' etc.). A light seems to dawn upon him when he begins speaking in the first person. From that day on he will never again revert to the third person. At first the child merely *felt* himself, now he *thinks* himself. The explanation of this phenomenon might be rather difficult for the anthropologist. (Kant 1978, 9)

Kant treats "anthropology" as an empirical discipline to be kept separate from philosophy proper. And, he insinuates that empirical investigations of this shift from "feeling" to "thinking" self-awareness cannot provide an adequate understanding of what is involved in this genesis of subjectivity proper (via the uttering of the "I"). Isn't this precisely what psychoanalytic metapsychology, as a nonempirical framework delineating the structural dynamics involved in the formation of subjectivity, concerns itself with explaining? Speaking of early childhood, Kant continues:

> In this period, when his eyes begin to follow bright objects which are held before him, we have the crude beginnings of a process of broadening perceptions (the apprehensions of sensory awareness) into a recognition of objects of the senses, that is, of experience. (Kant 1978, 10)

Not only does the emergence of the "I" alter the experience of the self, but the constitution of discrete objects also takes shape during the time of infancy. Although it might be difficult to assess whether the critical Kant retains these convictions, he does, in fact, call for a nonanthropological investigation into the genesis of subjective structure.[51] Over a century after this call, psychoanalysis appears with its proposed answers.

Finally, in comparing Kant and psychoanalysis, correlations arise from the interlinked topics of time and subjectivity. In Kant, the timeless side of the subject is unavailable to self-consciousness. The necessarily temporal experience of the self, refracted through the prism of inner sense, bars phenomenal access to the atemporal "I." In Freud, time is a phenomenon tied up exclusively with consciousness. The unconscious is fundamentally timeless, paying heed neither to the passage of time nor to the rules of chronology attached to the conscious registration of mnemic traces. The unconscious is atemporal; consciousness is, in part, temporal. And, just as for Kant, the timeless dimension of subjective structure is precisely what remains inaccessible. Consciousness is unable—at least on its own—to reflexively apprehend the timeless unconscious in an exhaustive manner.

However, Freud's concept of repression (and its accompanying defense mechanisms) marks a break with Kant. For Freud, the timeless unconscious is unavailable to conscious perception and/or introspection by virtue of repression and its ensuing censorship of particular thoughts bearing associational connections with repressed materials. Furthermore, while the formal, metapsychological unconscious is timeless, its content—the actualized unconscious—is material accumulated over the course of experience. The unconscious is far from being noumenal or transcendental in any exact, traditional sense. Kant contends that the timeless "I" is inherently barred from entering the field of self-consciousness; this is a result of the metaphysical–transcendental characteristics of subjectivity. Freud implies that the barring of the timeless "I" (as the unconscious) is due more to what Lacan calls *tuché,* namely, contingent, chance encounters that are subsequently repressed. Lacan, in the fourteenth seminar, notes that repression is what makes the Freudian subject a metapsychological version of the Kantian pathological subject.[52]

In his early years, Lacan is quite cautious about having recourse to Kant. In the second seminar, Lacan apparently reads Kant as participating in the glorification of the conscious ego and its powers of self-reflective cognition. Lacan rejects Kant vis-à-vis a hypothetical sentence in which a speaker says, "I have three brothers, Paul, Ernest and me."[53] For Lacan, the young speaker's inclusion of himself in the grammatical position of being a direct object of the sentence is indicative of the universal structure of ego-mediated individuality: Insofar as one has an identity, one is an object (the consequences of Freud's 1914 theses on narcissism here being radicalized). What the early Lacan overlooks, and what the later Lacan better appreciates, is that Kant would most likely agree with this conclusion. For Kant too, the psychoanalytic ego, insofar as it is a cluster of self-representations (potentially) available to consciousness, is not the genuine, transcendental subject conditioning the very emergence of this same ego.

Regardless of Freud's or the early Lacan's disputes with Kantianism, Lacanian theory is heavily indebted to Kant. The majority of commentaries on this relationship focus on two texts—the 1959–1960 seventh seminar (*The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*) and "*Kant avec Sade*" from the *Écrits*. The usual point of convergence is seen as one between the categorical imperative and the super-ego: Lacan shows how the purity of the categorical imperative is always–already compromised by the pathological stain of an obscene *jouissance* taking pleasure in the mechanical exercise of ethical maxims. Instead of departing from Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and *The Metaphysics of Morals,* returning to the Kantian subject as presented in both *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and the *Critique of Pure Reason* reveals a different but no less important line of influence.

Jacques-Alain Miller's interpretations of Lacanian thought provide the best window through which to observe the integration of the Kantian subject into the framework of analytic theory. Žižek's own work, in which he forges ties between Lacan and modern philosophy, is heavily influenced by Miller's teachings. Two of the concepts focused on by Miller are of particular use—"suture" and "extimacy." In his paper "*La Suture (éléments de la logique du signifiant),*" originally delivered on February 24, 1965, at a session of Lacan's twelfth seminar (*Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse*), Miller draws a comparison between the Lacanian subject (at least as presented in Lacan's seminars of the mid-sixties) and Frege's theory of numerical succession. In the eleventh seminar, this being the first seminar Miller audited, Lacan presents his distinction between the subject of enunciation and the subject of the utterance (apropos, for instance, the liar's paradox).[54] The subject of enunciation is the possibility condition for the generation of diachronically unfolding utterances. Additionally, this enunciating subject cannot emerge into view except through a distorting distillation into the residual materiality of the identificatory utterances constituting the objectival ego. Lacan calls this perpetually encountered failure of self-identification—this failure is remarkably similar to the unbridgeable gap between noumenal and phenomenal subjectivity thwarting the ambitions of self-consciousness in Kant—the "fading" of the subject.[55] Just as the pure "I" only ever knows itself as the phenomenal "I" of inner sense, so the subject of enunciation is forced to emerge through the mediating interference of its chains of signifiers. (Juan-David Nasio identifies this as the Lacanian "antinomy of the subject";[56] Alenka Zupančič accurately draws the connection between Kant and Lacan along the lines of the subject of the paralogisms.)[57]

According to Miller, the subject of enunciation is none other than the Fregian zero.[58] (It should be noted here that Lacan anticipates Miller's 1965 presentation in 1964, already referring to the number zero in his ef-

forts to convey his vision of subjectivity.)[59] Among integers, zero is unique to the extent that it is a number not identical to itself. What does this mean? Other positive whole numbers serve as both mathematical concepts (for example, "the concept of the number three") and as concretized quantities (for example, a quantity of material objects equal to "the concept of the number three"). Zero, on the other hand, is a concept bereft of the possibility of content—just as the transcendental subject is a formal condition incapable of fully materializing itself via self-reflection. In other words, no objects can embody the quantity designated as "the concept of the number zero." But, the signifier "zero"/"0" materializes this lack of numerical substantiality. "0," as the one (1) signifier of the concept zero, is the single object of "the concept of the number zero." Miller argues that, in Frege, the generation of the number one is the result of counting zero—zero is 1 integer, 2 is the counting of 0 and 1 as two integers, and so on. Put differently, the inclusion of a pure nil (what Miller terms "zero lack") as a signifier-integer in the sequence of whole numbers—counting zero as a single integer, a "zero number" materialized as a signifier—generates the first whole number (1). Suture is this process of signifying a lack, of assigning a name to a void.[60]

In Miller's interpretation of Lacan, the subject of enunciation gives rise to a subject of the utterance (that is, chains of signifiers) in which it tries to reflect itself to itself—this would be the problem of self-consciousness reworded in Lacanian parlance, which, in psychoanalysis, would also be called "identification."[61] As shown, Kant asserts that transcendental or noumenal subjectivity cannot ever reflectively recuperate itself given the interfering temporal matrix of inner sense. Similarly, Miller alleges that the subject as the Fregian zero simultaneously makes possible the unfolding of the chains of signifiers (in Fregian terms, of numerical chains) while nonetheless being necessarily incommensurable with these same chains. The "unary signifiers" suturing this place of subjectivity-as-lack (that is, the "I" and the proper name[62]) are placeholders for this originary failure of self-identification. Whereas Frege's number theory provides a useful metaphor for thinking through this problem, Kant explicitly and directly formulates this theme of subjectivity as failed self-identification.

Even more striking than the general fact of the broad parallel between the Kantian and Lacanian subjects is the specific fact that Lacan weaves together the fading of the subject and the theme of "temporal pulsation." In 1964, he states:

> The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification. But it functions as a signifier only to

> reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject. There, strictly speaking, is the temporal pulsation in which is established that which is the characteristic of the departure of the unconscious as such—the closing. (*SXI,* 207)

Lacan continues—"In a quite different way, I have called this movement the *fading* of the subject" (*SXI,* 208). In Kant, time is the medium responsible for alienating the subject from itself, for making the noumenal "I" an unknown "x," a *Ding an sich.* In Lacan, the repeated failure to cross the gap separating enunciation from utterance—this effort at crossing is designated "suture" by Miller[63]—is indicative of the barring of the timeless unconscious by a temporal pulsation. As both Kant and Žižek point out, the dehiscence at the heart of self-consciousness thwarts any potential substantification of the subject—any attempt to say what the subject, abstracted from its determinate predicates, "is" in and of itself.[64] But, what constitutes this rift? Temporality—as the irreducible tension between timelessness (the atemporal subjectivity of unconscious enunciation) and time (the phenomenal subjectivity of diachronic utterances)—is the gap constitutive of the Kantian–Lacanian subject.

In "Matrix," an essay that further explores the themes of "Suture," Miller discusses the relation between subjectivity and lack as a dynamic logic responsible for the unceasing repetition of identification—a repetition catalyzed by the failure of self-identification. Referring to the gap internal to subjective structure, Miller proclaims:

> The split does not reduce itself. Repetition does not cease. Alteration does not stabilize. In other words, one can't make an All of this entity, of this set, of these positions. This process—this entity—presents itself as untotalizable—or, as a contradictory totality, which is to say, a totality with its contradiction, or with its nonintegrable element, multiplicity irreducible to a unity. (Miller 1997, 49)

Phrased in Kantian locution, the phenomenal and noumenal halves of the subject never form a consistent, homogenous whole. Toward the end of his text, Miller remarks that, "A theory of time before a theory of space—that is the aesthetic of the signifier" (Miller 1997, 51). Is this "aesthetic of the signifier" a metapsychological–transcendental aesthetic formulated via Lacanian theory? Miller hints at something to this effect: Even if the noumenal subject of enunciation cannot be directly grasped, the logic whereby its structural exclusion is "written into" the signifying chains it produces can, in fact, be delineated.[65] Why refer to a "theory of

time" here? This indeed is the precise issue: Temporality, defined as the perpetual tension between the atemporal and time, is the underlying structure giving such phenomena as self-consciousness and "linguistic" subjectivity their decisive hue. On this, both Kant and Lacan agree.

Apart from the parallels between suture and the subject of the paralogisms, Miller's development of Lacan's concept of "*extimité*" (extimacy) is also correlated with Kantian subjectivity. Miller defines this as follows:

> [T]his expression 'extimacy' is necessary in order to escape the common ravings about a psychism supposedly located in a bipartition between interior and exterior. Let us qualify this last point, however, for it is not enough to say that this bipartition is unsatisfactory. We must also elaborate a relation in its stead. Indeed, it is so easy to slide into this interior-exterior bipartition that we need, for our own use, to substitute for it another relation . . . (Miller 1994, 75)

Miller continues: "The most interior—this is how the dictionary defines 'intimate' (*l'intime*)—has, in the analytic experience, a quality of exteriority. This is why Lacan invented the term 'extimate'" (Miller 1994, 76). In Žižek, the extimate is frequently referred to as "the little piece of the Real," what is "in you more than you," and so on and so forth. For Miller, it defines a certain (non)relation obtaining between the Real and the Symbolic.[66] The extimate is the kernel of the Real that remains perpetually undigested by the Symbolic matrix constituting the split subject. Miller and Žižek thus equate it with the Lacanian "formula of the fantasy": $\$ \lozenge a$.[67] This undigested remainder (*a*), while being most intimate given its centrality in the heart of the subject's unconscious and libidinal economy, is nonetheless an alien disturbance whose repellent, horrible nature is resisted and rejected by the ego: "Extimacy is not the contrary of intimacy. Extimacy says that the intimate is Other—like a foreign body, a parasite" (Miller 1994, 76). This theme of the "foreign body" resonates with Freud's *Unheimlich*[68] as well as Kristeva's motif of psychical subjectivity as the situation of being "strangers to ourselves."[69]

Extimacy is a concept that cannot be fully explicated without a thorough understanding of Lacan's *objet petit a* (see §21). For the time being, it's worth observing that, in the seventh seminar, Lacan refers to this *a* as *das Ding*—that is, the Real thing at the core of the unconscious circumscribed by the *Vorstellungen* of the subject. (The Real *tuché,* for instance, functions as *das Ding,* thus indicating that the "Thing" can also be a [traumatic] event.) This Thing drives the subject[70] (Laplanche calls it the "source-object" of the drive).[71] Behind the diachronic concatenations of Imaginary object-choices, inscribed as *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen,* lies an

invariable, unknown "x," the unconscious Real around which these representations turn and which dictates their structure. Therefore, for Lacan, *das Ding* epitomizes the extimate:

> [*D*] *as Ding* is at the center only in the sense that it is excluded. That is to say, in reality *das Ding* has to be posited as exterior, as the prehistoric Other that it is impossible to forget—the Other whose primacy of position Freud affirms in the form of something *entfremdet,* something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me, something that on the level of the unconscious only a representation can represent. (*SVII,* 71)

In the intimate center of subjectivity's inner sanctum lies this unknown, inappropriable presence that dominates the subject like an external force.[72] Furthermore, although psychical representations are (temporally) variable both as Imaginary and Symbolic functions—that is, caught in the *point de capiton* dynamic—the *a* as the Real Thing is what remains the same throughout the diachronic quilting operations catalyzed by successive object-choices. (Žižek compares *objet petit a* to Saul Kripke's "rigid designators," claiming "That 'surplus' in the object which stays the same in all possible worlds is 'something in it more than itself,' that is to say the Lacanian *objet petit a.*")[73] This Real Thing, as a dimension of the Imaginary "object," is that which is "in the object more than the object itself." Consequently, the *a* is atemporal—or, more precisely, the *a,* as the intersection of the Real and Imaginary–Symbolic reality, marks the eternal split between timelessness and temporalization (see §§21–23, and §§30–32).

How is extimacy, as embodied by *objet petit a,* related to the Kantian–Lacanian subject? In Kant, the timeless subject, whether as the transcendental unity of apperception at the level of the understanding or as the transcendental psychological idea serving as an "as if" regulative principle of reason, is intrinsically prohibited from entering the field of self-consciousness. Temporal inner sense always–already renders self-reflection through a phenomenal mirror. Consequently, the timeless, transcendental "I" is analogous to the *Ding an sich.* Just as the thing-in-itself is cognized exclusively through its constitution as an object-for-the-subject, so too is noumenal subjectivity *an sich* only grasped via phenomenal (re)presentation. Intuition indelibly stains the intentional acts issuing from the understanding and reason.

Lacan explicitly identifies the subject with the object *a* as *das Ding.*[74] Without a prior understanding of the Kantian subject, this identification would appear paradoxical at best—"*a* fills the gap constituted by the inaugural division of the subject. The *petit a* never crosses this gap . . . It is at this point of lack that the subject has to recognize himself" (*SXI,* 270). Put

differently, the "truth" of the subject resides in the fact that it can never directly apprehend itself as itself. The unconscious is not simply the reservoir of repression. Instead, self-consciousness and the unconscious ironically become two sides of the same Moebius band—the unconscious is structurally internal to the essence of modern self-consciousness.[75] Kant insists that the subject per se cannot substantialize itself; it cannot say of itself, unproblematically, "I am." Likewise, Lacan alleges that the unconscious is incapable of pronouncing "*ergo sum*"—"Such is the impossible movement that constitutes the horror of the relation to the dimension of the unconscious; everything is allowed to the unconscious except to articulate: . . . 'therefore I am'" (*SXIV,* 12/21/66). In blocking the unconscious's accession to being, Lacan, like Kant, takes his distance from Descartes—and from Freud as well, who believes himself to have proven the "existence" of the unconscious.[76] The subject of the unconscious reflectively recuperates itself only to lose itself as Imaginary ego. Étienne Balibar explains that this decisive barring of substantialization is a shared characteristic of both Kant and Lacan's subject: The subject is "the absolute other" (*l'autre absolu*) of substance.[77] In the same lecture, Balibar also connects Kant's "I think" with Lacan's *ça parle,* thus reinforcing the justification for understanding the Lacanian *Cogito* as a regulative principle of analytic reason.[78] Any attempt to elevate self-consciousness above the split introduced into it by Kant would be diagnosed by Lacan as a form of *méconnaissance.*[79]

In his 1974–1975 seminar *R.S.I.,* Lacan discusses the noumenal–phenomenal distinction in terms of his own psychoanalytic topology. He suggests that the noumenal gives rise to the metaphoric image of a "hole"—"It is strictly impossible to not make emerge, on the basis of the noumena conceived of in opposition to the phenomena, the metaphor of the hole . . . The noumena is nothing other than the hole, this hole that we find again in our symbolic, named as such" (*SXXII,* 3/18/75). In alleging that the noumenal is a hole to be met with in the Symbolic, Lacan recasts the notion of the fading of the subject (or, the Millerian suture) in topological terms. Earlier, in the sixth seminar, Lacan foreshadows this reading of noumenal subjectivity—"The subject is himself, so to speak, a negative object" (Lacan 1977a, 49). The noumenal *sujet* is a *trou*—a "negative object"—to the extent that it automatically fails to find a foothold in the determinate predications of itself achieved via the detour through the big Other. In the twentieth seminar, Lacan claims that the topology of holes/gaps—a topology to which his theory of the subject is appended—avoids the pitfalls of substantialization.[80] Perhaps the best philosophical analogue of this subjective topology is Wittgenstein's diagram of the relationship between the eye and the visual field in the *Tractatus:*

> The subject does not belong to the world: rather, it is a limit of the world. Where *in* the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do *not* see the eye. And nothing *in the visual field* allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye. (Wittgenstein 1961, 117 [5.632–5.633])

The eye corresponds to the noumenal "I"—Wittgenstein himself explicitly uses the eye as a metaphor for the "I"—while the visual field encompasses the phenomenal domain. (Henry Allison articulately establishes this comparison between Wittgenstein's vision metaphor and Kant's conception of subjectivity.)[81] For Wittgenstein, the eye is indeed a "hole" in the visual field, being a point that, by its very function, cannot be included within this same field. Like Wittgenstein's "I"/eye, the Lacanian version of the Kantian *Cogito* (the phenomenal subject with noumenal "holes") can only be grasped as a negative rupture in the otherwise consistent fabric of the positivized symbolic order (the sphere of the Other, that "battery of the signifier,"[82] where the "I" receives its predications constitutive of identificatory formations).[83] A question remains as to whether this "spatialization" of the subject is compatible with the Kantian position that inner sense—as the field through which all acts of self-consciousness necessarily pass—and, therefore, time, is the medium of subjectivity proper.[84]

The Lacanian matheme $\$ \lozenge a$ knots together many of the above threads in a single formula—"the moment of 'fading' or eclipse of the subject . . . is closely bound up with the *Spaltung* or splitting that it suffers from its subordination to the signifier. This is what is symbolized by the sigla ($\$ \lozenge a$)" (Lacan 1977i, 313).[85] The Kantian–Lacanian split subject ($) is cleaved in half by the interfering mediation of time. In Kant, this time is the pure form of intuition governing inner sense. Time results in the "epistemological schizophrenia" of self-consciousness.[86] In Lacan, time is the diachrony of the signifying chain in which the subject of enunciation loses itself as the subject of the utterance, this being the meaning of Lacan's mantra that "the signifier represents the subject for another signifier"—the fading of the subject is precisely this diachronic sliding-without-closure from one signifier to an-other.[87] For both thinkers, the introduction of a temporal dimension results in the splitting of subjectivity into a structural simultaneity of timelessness and temporalization: The synchronic subject of the unconscious and the diachronic subject accessible to consciousness remain forever out of synch. The remainder of this operation of division is the unknowable unification of the subject as seamless ipseity. The antagonism constitutive of $ yields *a,* the elusive *das Ding* implied by self-consciousness and yet beyond its scope.[88] As Cutrofello notes, if there is a difference on this point between Kant and Lacan, it

amounts to Lacan emphasizing that the gap between the two halves of subjectivity cannot be fully sutured in any way.[89] There mustn't be any resolution of the antinomy of subjectivity. If anything, the antinomy is exacerbated by psychoanalysis—the noumenal "I" is perhaps not even thinkable in its ontological thingliness as per Kant, but, as Real, it is "impossible," maybe even nonexistent.[90] Temporality, as the irresolvable tension between the noumenal and the phenomenal, defines the Kantian–Lacanian subject. Defining this subject in terms of temporality allows for the elucidation of its structure without substantializing it as an entity.

But, isn't it true that psychoanalysis treats subjectivity as a historical construction, not as a transcendental given? Doesn't this shotgun marriage between Kant and Lacan risk overshadowing the uniqueness of psychoanalysis against the background of the history of philosophy? In the opening chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud delineates the genesis of the psychical topography. The ego congeals out of the id, and is formed through the course of experience. In a discussion of the "oceanic feeling," Freud argues:

> The idea of men's receiving an intimation of their connection with the world around them through an immediate feeling which is from the outset directed to that purpose sounds so strange and fits in so badly with the fabric of our psychology that one is justified in attempting to discover a psycho-analytic—that is, a genetic—explanation of such a feeling. The following line of thought suggests itself. Normally, there is nothing of which we are more certain than the feeling of our self, of our own ego. This ego appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctively from everything else. That such an appearance is deceptive, and that on the contrary the ego is continued inwards, without any sharp delimitation, into an unconscious mental entity which we designate as the id and for which it serves as a kind of façade—this was a discovery first made by psycho-analytic research, which should still have much more to tell us about the relation of the ego to the id. But towards the outside, at any rate, the ego seems to maintain clear and sharp lines of demarcation. (*SE* 21: 65–66)

One of the most remarkable segments of the above quotation is Freud's equivocation between the analytic and the genetic: "a psycho-analytic—that is, a genetic— explanation." In addition, Freud makes it clear that the ego is a "learned" acquisition.[91] (Laplanche and Pontalis observe that the concept of the id, which takes over many of the functions allotted to the unconscious in the first topography, emphasizes a much more gradual genesis of psychical divisions than the earlier theory of repression.)[92]

Although the sense of autonomous selfhood characteristic of the ego appears as an innate quality to the individual, Freud contends that this agency has a genealogy of sorts, that is, this sense is a genetically generated result or accomplishment. Isn't this historicization of the self-subject something that separates analytic theory from modern philosophies?

The immediate Lacanian response is that one mustn't confuse the ego with the subject. However, this does not get around the problem. Insofar as the Lacanian *sujet* is defined as the lack or failure of self-reflective identification—that is, the subject of the unconscious as "out of joint" with the ego—this subject itself doesn't emerge until the ego exists as a series of determinate, identificatory predicates against which the subject-versus-ego contrast takes shape. Of even greater interest is the fact that Lacan's reading of the *Cogito* (especially in the ninth seminar) places the "unary trait" qua determinate signifier prior to the *Cogito*. In other words, the Lacanian *Cogito,* as a genetic *Cogito,* is an effect of the signifier—"it is from the effect of the signifier that the subject as such emerges" (*SIX,* 3/28/62).[93] Isn't this consistent with the Lacanian (temporal) recasting of Freud's *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*?

Lacan reverses the typical Kantian schema. The transcendental subject doesn't have an a-prioricity in any chronological sense, since the determinate phenomenal contents—for example, the chance *tuché* of the Real—that cause the subjective *Spaltung* come first. The Cartesian–Kantian subject, transposed into Lacan's theory as the subject of unconscious enunciation, is the residual by-product of what modern philosophy would deem chance, empirico-contingent elements. Where "it" (*ça,* the Real *tuché,* and/or the signifier in/of the Other) was, there must "I" (the *je,* the noumenal subject [$] of the unconscious) come to be.[94]

In psychoanalysis, what metapsychological functions precede the emergence of the ego and the corresponding structure of the subject? What conditions the formation of the ego? One answer immediately comes to mind—the drives. In the second topography, Freud stipulates that the ego is formed out of the id. And, what is the id, particularly as distinguished from the unconscious as constituted by repressed representations? The id is the "seat of the drives."[95] Lacan's entire critique of ego psychology is based on stressing the position of the ego in Freud's second topography (as foreshadowed by the 1914 portrayal of the ego as an object of narcissistic investments). Thus, if psychoanalytic metapsychology is to be treated as a transcendental system, an investigation of *Trieb* as a key possibility condition for the genesis of the analytic subject is of paramount importance. This investigation stems from the essential spirit of Lacan's enduring endeavor—the construction of a genetic psychoanalytic metapsychology, the delineation of the conditions of possibility ("ultra-

transcendental" elements) preceding the emergence of modernity's transcendental "I."

In the second part of this project, a new theory of the metapsychological structure of *Trieb* is presented. Instead of focusing on the two conflicts within which Freud situates drives—drives are first involved in the conflict between psychical reality (the pleasure principle and the primary processes) and external reality, and then, after 1920, in the *Eros–Todestrieb* dualism as well—it will be maintained that Freud overlooks a split internal to the very heart of the metapsychological structure of *Trieb.* The four essential components of drive line up along two axes—an "axis of iteration" (source–pressure) and an "axis of alteration" (aim–object). The axis of iteration is the atemporal, quasi-noumenal half of drive. It tirelessly seeks an "eternal return of the same satisfaction." The axis of alteration is the temporalized, phenomenal half of drive. As constituted by signifier-like representations, it involves the temporal dynamics of screen memories, day residues, the *point de capiton,* and the *après-coup* effect. Hence, much like the Kantian subject divided by temporality, *Trieb,* as the preceding condition of possibility for the psychoanalytic subject, reflects a parallel division between the timeless and the temporal. (Žižek notes the correspondence of the modern problem of self-consciousness with the self-defeating nature of the psychoanalytic drive[96]—however, he doesn't directly identify time and/or temporality as the common source of these two "failures.") This is not to play the chronological time of a developmental psychology against the transcendental apparatus of modern philosophy, but to show how the temporality of the Kantian–Lacanian subject is prefigured by the metapsychological condition of the (possible) emergence of all subjects, namely, drive.

Part 2

# The Splitting of the Drive

5

# The Fundamental Conflicts of Psychoanalysis

## §15 *Eros–Thanatos*—Freud's Final Division

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* marks a profound shift in Freud's thought, adding a remarkably novel twist to his continually invoked theme of the primacy of conflict within the psyche.[1] The primary theoretical change announced in this text is well known: The human psyche is divided against itself in the struggle between life and death drives, a struggle over which the pleasure principle can no longer be said to invariably rule.[2] *Civilization and Its Discontents,* one of Freud's most famous texts written after the 1920 abandonment of the thesis regarding the primacy of the pleasure principle, employs two dichotomies in the effort to resolve the single enigma of perpetual human suffering. In attempting to answer questions as to why both individuals and entire societies find themselves in a state of recurrent malaise (despite increasingly favorable circumstances of existence), Freud advances two hypotheses. First, the irreconcilable tension between *Eros* and the *Todestrieb* internal to each subject's libidinal organization condemns the individual to endure a perpetual margin of dissatisfaction. In a sense, individuals sabotage themselves, thwarting their own attainment of enjoyment (neurotics epitomize this self-subversion in that they invariably find ways of avoiding pleasure and/or inculcating feelings of guilt). Second, beyond the conflict internal to individual subjects' psychical systems, discrepancies are always at work between drives and civilization.[3] The social order, although providing pathways of sublimation for various drives—of course, aggressive drives are sublimated through the installation of a super-ego, which results in further conscious suffering in the form of guilt—ultimately must check the unmitigated expression of libidinal urges so as to maintain a collective stability. On this level, Freud

retains the earlier distinction between the pleasure principle (that is, drives in general) and the reality principle (civilization). However, the pleasure principle no longer plays the obviously dominant role that it did before.[4]

Human suffering is the main issue prompting Freud's drastic change of mind in 1920. Although the dual drive model is partially intended as a response to the "monolibidinalism" of Jung, it can easily be understood as organically emerging out of decisive conceptual impasses in Freud's own work. The initial difficulties for Freud arise from traumatic neurosis. Why do certain patients repeatedly return, in both their nocturnal dreams and daytime recollections, to scenes of a terrible trauma? Why is there a recurrent arousal of pain and anxiety in this class of neurotics? Furthermore, Freud locates traits of traumatic neurosis in other analytic phenomena pertaining to all types of analysands—the insistent repetition of repressed material in the transference, the "negative therapeutic reaction," the occurrence of resistance, and so on.[5] After taking these factors into account, Freud recants as to the dominance of the pleasure principle: On a certain level, human beings desire pain and suffering. The basis for positing a separate category of *Trieb,* one operating independently of the pleasure principle, resides in two observed features of human psychical life—compulsive repetition and the accompanying recurrence of negative affects.[6]

For now, an explication of the various nuances of the death drive must be postponed (see §20). Simply cataloguing the multiple senses of this notion in Freud's writings would be a book-length project unto itself. One should note that the incredibly problematic nature of the death drive is due, in large part, to Freud's employment of it in an extremely loose fashion. It permits him numerous equivocations—a reduction of tension to zero and a homeostatic constancy of tension (the death drive and the "Nirvana principle" are often treated as interchangeable);[7] the tendency toward unpleasure and the pleasure of repetition (the death drive is both "beyond the pleasure principle" and yet a servant of it);[8] the diminution of tension and the arousal of aggression (the death drive is both the peaceful absence of excitation and the impulse to engage in violent behavior).[9] Freud fails to fully clarify the precise nature of the death drive. In a way, it signifies both everything and nothing—never encountered in a pure state, and yet always dominating the field of human reality.[10]

In the face of these Freudian inconsistencies, the most productive strategy is to selectively extract the useful components of the final drive theory—this involves highlighting and preserving particular traits of the *Todestrieb,* while rejecting others. The combined aspects of repetition com-

pulsion and unpleasure prompt Freud's formulation of the death drive. This new drive accounts for those behaviors that are inexplicable in terms of the pleasure principle alone. (With the concept of "abreaction," Freud views the painful repetition of a trauma as a preparation for the lowering of tension demanded by the Nirvana/pleasure principle—the death drive is sometimes a requisite factor anterior to, and paving the way for, the pleasure principle.)[11] Freud's most promising line of thought regarding the new drive theory is his suggestion that the death drive represents not so much a separate drive category in itself, but that, to a certain extent, it portrays all drives. The death drive is a description of drives in general, namely, the metapsychological theory of drives at its most speculative level.[12]

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), the generalization of the death drive's functions becomes more pronounced. (In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud vacillates between treating the *Todestrieb* as the polar opposite of *Eros* and blending the two together.) In Freud's view, one common characteristic of all drives is their conservative nature—"both the instincts would be conservative in the strictest sense of the word, since both would be endeavouring to re-establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life" (*SE* 19: 40). Freud continues:

> We have reckoned as though there existed in the mind—whether in the ego or in the id—a displaceable energy, which, neutral in itself, can be added to a qualitatively differentiated erotic or destructive impulse, and augment its total cathexis. Without assuming the existence of a displaceable energy of this kind we can make no headway. The only question is where it comes from, what it belongs to, and what it signifies. (*SE* 19: 44)

A few paragraphs later, Freud speaks of a "displaceable and neutral energy." Despite initial impressions, this doesn't amount to a tacit acceptance of the Jungian position. In "On Narcissism," Freud contends that libidinal energy is differentiated by virtue of the location/direction of its cathexes; an investment in the ego results in narcissistic ego-libido, and an investment in another person results in anaclitic object-libido.[13] The energy in and of itself is an unknown "x."[14] Although the same energy may indeed underlie all drives, Freud does not believe that collapsing the essential differences between distinct manifestations of drives has any explanatory utility whatsoever. This force, this mobile and displaceable variable, is only ever encountered in the various concrete admixtures observed in analysis. Likewise, in *The Ego and the Id,* Freud wonders if the same conditions don't also hold for the new dual drive theory. Is the irreconcilable tension between *Eros* and the *Todestrieb* a result of two per-

mutations ultimately stemming from a single energetic reservoir? Are life and death drives driven by the same energy?

Freud returns to the problem of the metapsychological status of the dual drive theory in the 1933 *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis.* He suggests there that every drive involves "fusions or alloys" of the two trends designated via the two overarching categories of *Trieb*—"every instinctual impulse that we can examine consists of . . . fusions or alloys of the two classes of instinct. These fusions, of course, would be in the most varied ratios" (*SE* 22: 104–105).[15] In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* the descriptive generality of the metabiological narrative permitting the analogies between brute organic substance and the psychical apparatus leads Freud to conclusions about a conservative trajectory internal to all drives operative in a living being.[16] And, Freud seemingly embraces this consequence, despite the fact that it renders the avowed dualism of this period somewhat problematic. But, in 1933, Freud removes the confident exclamation point from the single-energy thesis, replacing it with an inconclusive question mark:

> We are not asserting that death is the only aim of life; we are not overlooking the fact that there is life as well as death. We recognize two basic instincts and give each of them its own aim. How the two of them are mingled in the process of living, how the death instinct is made to serve the purposes of Eros, especially by being turned outwards as aggressiveness—these are tasks which are left to future investigation. We have not gone beyond the point at which this prospect lies open before us. The question, too, of whether the conservative character may not belong to all instincts without exception, whether the erotic instincts as well may not be seeking to bring back an earlier state of things when they strive to bring about a synthesis of living things into greater unities—this question, too, we must leave unanswered. (*SE* 22: 107–108)

It is quite possible that Freud's reluctance stems from his fears of walking backwards into the monolibidinalism of Jung. Nonetheless, as Marcuse observes, "Freud is driven to emphasize time and again the common nature of the instincts prior to their differentiation" (Marcuse 1955, 22). Why is it that Freud, even in his desire to insist upon the dichotomous nature of drives, cannot escape this generalization-effect subverting any such dichotomy? The conservative character isolated in the second topography—that is, the desire to restore an earlier state of affairs—makes the universalization of the death drive inevitable: The foundations of Freud's theory and technique reside in such interrelated mechanisms as sublimation, object-choice, the Oedipus complex, and transference. And,

all of these mechanisms exhibit the attempt to return to an initial set of cathexes—the displacement of an earlier, aim-inhibited drive, the attempt to recuperate the archaic lost object through later substitutes, and the inadvertent reliving of past relationships in present contexts. One of the basic lessons of psychoanalysis is the inevitability of this unmasterable intrusion of the past within the framework of the present. Freud cannot avoid the conclusion that the death drive, as essentially the repetition compulsion linked to an inherently conservative psychical dimension, is not a drive in itself, a separate, compartmentalized feature of the psyche. Instead, it amounts to a representation of fundamental facets of *Trieb* at the level of its basic structure.

The primary Freudian text delineating the metapsychological skeleton of *Trieb* is the 1915 "Drives and Their Vicissitudes." Even in the new drive theory of the second topography, Freud never retracts this earlier drive schema. Hence, one can safely assume that all drives are still necessarily composed of a source, pressure, aim, and object. Many of the difficulties encountered in the later presentations of the death drive can be attributed to Freud's failure to precisely align the death drive with this metapsychological schema. Jean Laplanche asserts that Freud remains wedded to the notion of a single energy underpinning the apparently heterogeneous permutations of drive—"whilst he does postulate the existence of two kinds of drive, Freud never accepts that there might be two kinds of instinctual energy; he never accepts the existence of an energy specific to the death drive" (Laplanche 1989, 146). Hence, Freud's drive theory is only dualistic in a sense other than the energetic one.

In "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," the energetic features of drive apply to source and/or pressure—that is, the quasi-somatic insistence of the drive upon gratification. (In Lacanian parlance, Richard Boothby identifies the Freudian death drive as the intrusion of the "psychically unprocessed *real* of the body.")[17] Does this mean that the two classes of life and death drives result from a difference at the level of drive-aim and/or drive-object? The most dubious moments of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* occur when Freud tries to maintain that death, as the "earliest state of affairs," is a goal sought by certain drives. How can death, which is never experienced and which the unconscious allegedly has no conception of according to Freud himself, function as an invested coordinate within the psyche's libidinal economy?[18] Taken in this biological sense, why would any organism ever bother prolonging its own life, since an overpowering drive, with self-destruction as an aim, would dictate immediate suicide?[19] Instead of being fixated upon a single goal, don't drives exhibit an enormous degree of plasticity in terms of aims and objects? In making death an objectival "state" forming the invariable point of cathexis for drives,

doesn't Freud implicitly abandon the key concept of sublimation—aim-inhibition and substitutive object-choice—that is, the historicized dimension of *Trieb* distinguishing it from nonhistoricized animal instinct? These questions indicate just how crucial it is to reconcile the drive theory of the second topography with the metapsychological specifications concerning drive's invariant structure—the very conditions for identifying something as a drive per se rather than an instinct, namely, its fourfold composition. Without doing so, the very meaning of the term *Trieb* becomes impossible to comprehend as having any theoretical exactitude after 1920.[20]

## §16 Toward a Temporalized Metapsychology

Freud's final revisions of his drive theory remain incredibly problematic given the number of inconsistencies to be found therein. At stake in the previous questions about the connections between the 1915 and post-1920 theorizations of *Trieb* is a difficulty that lies at the very heart of Freudian psychoanalysis. Analytic theory adheres to two somewhat unreconciled assumptions. On the one hand, it claims that drives, as the libidinal forces of the psyche par excellence, result in the repetitive recurrence of the past within the present. Simply put, early fixations from childhood dictate later adult behavior. On the other hand, drives are infinitely alterable. In light of the barriers raised by the reality principle, drives readily accept detours—new object-choices made in the face of aim-inhibitions—in the quest for gratification. If the archaic object can no longer be had, a new one will soon take its place. One might maintain that there isn't really any tension between these two axiomatic assumptions; perhaps this is a case of a logic obeying the form of "the same but different" (namely, the "same" drive, but with different aims and objects).

This ad hoc caveat in defense of Freud is extremely unsatisfying. To begin with, according to the 1915 model, a drive is not simply a displaceable, energetic constant. If the aims and objects of a drive are changed, then the drive itself, by definition, is changed. In this case, sublimation is more than the minor redirecting of a drive. It involves a major alteration of the actual nature of the drive itself. Freud's description of libidinal "stages" from the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* hints at precisely this: Drives are differentiated by their aims and objects (oral, anal, and genital), and the psychical prevalence of these distinct categories of drives shifts in relation to the exigencies of external reality (most notably, in

relation to the Oedipal dynamics of the familial milieu). From this perspective, sublimation is a concept that should be added to the list of other Freudian ideas challenging the supposedly timeless nature of unconscious phenomena.

Beneath this initial objection lies a more fundamental problem: An understanding of temporality in Freudian metapsychology is especially lacking. The unconscious is supposedly atemporal, and yet, at the same time, exhibits numerous temporal functions. Lacan's *point de capiton* and Laplanche's radicalization of *Nachträglichkeit* each demonstrate that the unconscious isn't simply timeless (and, each of them shows how these conceptualizations of psychical–temporal processes can be developed out of Freud's own writings). Nonetheless, Lacan himself also vacillates on the issue of time: The unconscious is timeless, and yet it exhibits a "temporal pulsation." Is this merely a contradiction? Is there a reason why Lacan advances both viewpoints?

Freud's final drive theory emphasizes the "conservative" nature of all drives—drives are fixated on the past. The various repetitive patterns discerned in the analyses of patients originate in repressed materials from earlier periods of psychical life. Every drive is nostalgically oriented along a return path to previous states of experience. From a Freudian perspective, such an insistence of the past is further proof of the atemporal, indestructible nature of the unconscious. Of course, this perspective elides a valid distinction between regression and repetition: Just because drives seek to reestablish a previous state of affairs does not mean that this state of affairs is therefore fully reduplicated by the attempt at this regressive course of return.[21] Furthermore, as noted, the privileging of the past implies an automatic recognition by the unconscious of a chronological hierarchy amongst its mnemic components. The unconscious does indeed have some sort of awareness of time.

At the opposite extreme, contra the Freudian marginalization of temporality, Jean Laplanche's recent efforts to have the "deferred action" of hysterical trauma serve as the paradigmatic structure of psychoanalytic time strive to uncover a temporal dynamic shaping psychical life as a whole. (And, given that Laplanche is one of the most prominent contemporary psychoanalytic thinkers to have attempted the development of a sophisticated philosophical theory of temporality in relation to Freud's metapsychology, his efforts along these lines are worth examining.) In the 1894 *Studies on Hysteria,* Freud uncovers the curious fact that traumas, as sexually charged events typically occurring in early childhood, are frequently triggered only with the addition of a second, seemingly benign event. This second event establishes associational connections with the initial event, which is thus rendered traumatic "after the fact." How does

Laplanche generalize this pathological process isolated to a restricted group of patients? Why should this model of a quite specific form of trauma be elevated into a metapsychological universal applicable to any and every sort of subject?

Laplanche asserts that Freud's abandonment of his early seduction theory is, despite common analytic wisdom concurring with this choice, a costly mistake. Prior to 1897, Freud alleges that a wide range of neurotic symptoms arise from instances of actual childhood seduction scenarios. In other words, every neurotic patient experienced seductions by adults in the past. And, Freud receives corroboration of this hypothesis; his analysands produce memories of sexually traumatic childhood occurrences involving parents, extended family members, and other adults. But, Freud comes to doubt the possibility that so many individuals were sexually abused as children. He thinks it highly unlikely that this kind of behavior is so widespread within families.[22] The "realist" position of the first version of the seduction theory is replaced by a hypothesis in which fantasy takes center stage. Freud now asserts that, although some analysands might very well have been seduced and/or molested in childhood, most analysands' memories of such occurrences are actually fantasies, perhaps retroactively reconstructed like screen memories. These individuals, as Oedipalized children, wish for sexual relations with the adults of the family drama. The "traumatic" recollection of seduction is hence a belated, veiled fulfillment of that long-repressed wish.[23]

In calling for the revival of the pre-1897 "realist" seduction theory, Laplanche isn't alleging that "factual" occurrences of sexual abuse are almost universally prevalent. (In other words, Laplanche's position is not the same as that of Jeffrey Masson, who portrays Freud's refusal to believe in a real-world epidemic of child abuse as a morally condemnable "assault on truth.") He does claim that seductions are intrinsic to the structural genesis of every subject's unconscious—every subject experiences what Laplanche designates as an "implantation of adult sexuality in the child."[24] By "seduction," Laplanche has something much broader in mind than the early Freud. For Laplanche, seductions are not simply blatant sexual overtures made by adults towards helpless young children. They are not just datable events registered as distinct traumas. Instead, Laplanche speaks of these sexual nuclei of the unconscious as "enigmatic signifiers"—a phrase that, despite Laplanche's frequent dismissal of Lacan's structuralist vocabulary, is borrowed straight from the *Écrits*.[25]

What does Laplanche mean by "enigmatic signifiers"? How do these signifiers justify returning to a model of seduction rejected by Freud himself? In support of his contentions, Laplanche suggests a reassessment of

that most familiar of psychoanalyzed objects, namely, the maternal breast. Breast-feeding is of vital importance for the infant's survival. However, of course, this oral activity is double sided: A nutritional, physical need is met through breast-feeding, but this instinctual activity invariably becomes eroticized—at such a moment, instinct becomes drive, need becomes desire.[26] The child begins taking immense pleasure in both the tactile sensations associated with the mechanical actions of feeding as well as the narcissistic sense of omnipotence linked to the control of the mother's behavior as a person/object supplying gratification. Laplanche accurately observes that this account, while being largely correct, fails to remark upon the eroticization of breast-feeding for the adult mother (usually, only the child's eroticization of the breast is highlighted):

> It is the adult who brings the breast, and not the milk, into the foreground—and does so due to her own desire, conscious and above all unconscious. For the breast is not only an organ for feeding children but a sexual organ, something which is *utterly overlooked by Freud and has been since Freud*. Not a single text, not even a single remark of Freud's takes account of the fact that the female breast is excitable, not only in feeding, but simply in the woman's sexual life. (Laplanche 1999a, 78)

Laplanche implies that if the infant invariably eroticizes the breast (and not the milk, the proper object of nutritional need strictly speaking), this is due, in part, to the fact that this organ is already eroticized by the (m)other herself. Laplanche hence concretizes, with a very clear and simple example, Lacan's dictum that "desire is the desire of the Other." Laplanche's conclusion is that analytic theory needs to include a conceptualization of the inevitable interaction (or, one could say, cross-fertilization) of the unconscious of the child with the unconscious of the adult—he accuses Freud and his followers of ignoring the latter factor.[27]

But, enigmatic signifiers have yet to be defined. Sticking with the breast example, the child begins to notice certain peculiarities about its mother connected with the activity of breast-feeding. Perhaps the mother's face takes on particular expressions during feeding. Or, the mother might engage in specific verbal games with the child before, during, and/or after feeding. The child rightly recognizes these anomalies in the other's appearance, comportment, and actions as signals of a poorly understood desire—it is likely that the mother herself is unaware of these details surrounding her feeding of the child. These signifiers of the (unconscious) desire of the other are far removed from the restrictive linguistic definition of the signifier in its traditional sense:

> So what I mean by signifier is that a thing like the breast is not only an object, it is a message presented to the child. But, in the enigmatic signifier, there is not only an explicit message, but also an implicit message, and the child cannot but understand that there is something hidden in it. He doesn't understand it exactly, has no idea of what the fantasies of the mother are (about sexual pleasure in the breast and so on), but it is impossible in this relationship that something is not perceived of that 'normal parapraxis'; what is perceived is that this gesture has something of another meaning, another meaning which is even unknown to the mother herself. That is the most obvious example of the enigmatic signifier. Any gesture is usually materialised by a thing but a thing having meaning. It is not just an object, it is a part of the body which has much meaning. So it is impossible to think of it without taking into account its divided situation; it has more meaning for the adult than for the child, the more being precisely the sexual part of it. (Laplanche 1992b, 22)

Based on observations made regarding the mother, the child starts asking itself questions: "What does mother want from me?" "Why does she look at me that way when I do certain things?" "What is the meaning of her actions when I ask for specific objects?" The mnemic traces of the other's somewhat opaque words and/or actions, endowed with a significance only partially apprehended by the young human being, become enigmatic signifiers. Much of the Laplanche's vision of the unconscious is constituted by fantasmatic attempts to answer the questions provoked by the muffled presence of alien desires. Again, the parallels with Lacan are too striking to ignore: The Lacanian "*Che vuoi?*" ("What does the Other want from me?") reappears in Laplanche's theory under the guise of a slightly modified terminology.[28]

What does all this have to do with the *après-coup* of hysterical trauma and a psychoanalytic theory of temporality? Laplanche's enigmatic signifier, like Jacques-Alain Miller's extimate object—the little piece of the Real, the splinter of externality embedded in the interior of the psyche—is an introjected-yet-undigested fragment subsisting within the fabric of the unconscious.[29] Both Lacan and Miller assert that the Symbolic continually gravitates around this Real in a futile effort to adequately integrate its disturbing presence. Analogously, Laplanche sees symptoms, dreams, and fantasies as partial "translations" of the unknown-yet-intuited desires of childhood others qua the sexualized world of adults, a world that always–already prematurely and traumatically intrudes into the child's pre-sexual universe—"It is an other thing (*das Andere*) in me, the repressed residue of the other person (*der Andere*). It *affects me* as the other person affected me long ago" (Laplanche 1999b, 108).[30] Laplanche's no-

tion of an interiorized externality is, in a way, a clinically situated apprehension of Lacan's metapsychological theses on extimacy:

> From the model of physical trauma we have moved to psychical trauma: not through any vague or unthematized analogy from one domain to the other, but through a precise transition: the movement from the external to the internal. What defines psychical trauma is not any general quality of the psyche, but the fact that the psychical trauma comes from within. A kind of *internal-external* instance had been formed: a 'spine in the flesh' or, we might say, a veritable spine in the *protective wall of the ego.* (Laplanche 1976, 42)

According to this definition, the traumatic nuclei, retroactively activated by later instances associated with the initial inscription of the "prototrauma," are mnemic traces laden with evocations of others' unknown desires—this provocative aura of alien desire is "seductive" in Laplanche's sense. These mnemic traces become fixed points around which revolves the labor of (unconsciously) answering the questions stimulated by these enigmas. For instance, the subject might retain a memory of the mother's facial expression during breast-feeding. Maybe this subject encounters, in later life, the same expression on the face of a sexual partner. If an associational link of resemblance is forged with sufficient strength, the initial memory trace may undergo repression in a retroactive fashion identical to the one observed in hysteria.[31] The formations of the unconscious aroused into effective present existence by the desire of this adult sexual partner—this partner is now unconsciously treated as structurally isomorphic with the enigmatic desire of the maternal partner qua primary love-object—are belated endeavors to answer the unresolved questions posed from the very start by the first registered traces of significant others. According to Laplanche, the unconscious is, above all else, a backwards glance perpetually fixated upon determinate points of inquiry, that is to say, enigmatic loci incapable of receiving an exhaustive elaboration yet nonetheless demanding repeated associational translations.

Like Lacan, Laplanche is stuck in an unresolved oscillation between deeming the unconscious atemporal and, at the same time, claiming to have revealed a psychoanalytic theory of temporality. In an essay on Laplanche, Andrew Benjamin characterizes his project thus:

> [T]he time in question—Freud's time—amounted to no more than the simple positing of the past, present and future. Posited time caught in the inexorable movement sanctioned by teleology marks the result of Freud's failure to develop a psychoanalytic conception of time. The

> attempt at such a development forms a central part of Laplanche's undertaking. (Benjamin 1992, 143)

Yet, although Laplanche repeatedly criticizes Freud for relegating the role of temporality to the linear chronology of conscious time, Laplanche himself reaffirms the fundamental timelessness of the unconscious. Replying to the question, "Can one speak of temporalisation in respect of the unconscious?" he states:

> No, I don't think so. I stand by Freud's general formulation about this. I only try to explain what it means. Freud said there is no negation in the unconscious, there is no time, there is no doubt nor certitude. It means there are no bounds, no thought; and time means binding. Time or temporalisation means binding events together to make a line, to make a discourse in its widest sense. We think of the unconscious as remainders of messages, remainders of bindings but without binding. In that respect I am completely against Lacan's formulation that the unconscious is structured like a language, which means that in some way it is temporal too. I think it is completely atemporal. (Laplanche 1992b, 26)

A little further on, Laplanche qualifies this endorsement of the Freudian position—"what Freud says about the atemporal unconscious would be true only for the core but not for the more and more superficial levels of it" (Laplanche 1992b, 27). Given this qualification, what does Laplanche see, at the "more superficial levels" of psychical life, as temporal? And, what constitutes this atemporal "core" of the unconscious?

Laplanche offers a formula responding to inquiries about the relation between the timeless and the temporal—"the other is the immobile motor of the movement of temporalisation" (Laplanche 1992a, 17).[32] By "other," Laplanche includes fixed representations functioning in the capacity of enigmatic signifiers. Ideational traces, infused with the vaguely perceived aura of the unconscious desires of adult others, implant themselves in the psychical structure of the child. Laplanche speaks of these as "frozen and fixed representations":

> [T]he cause or causes that psychoanalysis searches for and uncovers are of the order of representation, they are memories, fantasies or imaginings, and imagos, with two sets of distinctive features. They are representations that are so to speak frozen, fixed beyond the meaning that may inhabit them, beyond the multiple meanings that may be assigned to them. These frozen and fixed representations have the generative power

> of schemas as well as the materiality of *quasi-things.* (Laplanche 1999c, 120)

It becomes clearer why Laplanche, despite his voiced disagreements with Lacan, retains the word "signifier": Enigmatic signifiers are the static, quasi-material points around which are woven successive series of signifieds—that is, meanings assigned to the fixed mnemic trace. Furthermore, Laplanche's distinction between the frozen signifier and the successive series of signifieds engendered by it—elsewhere, he speaks of this continual assignment of signifieds as the work of psychical "translation"[33]—corresponds to the differentiation between the atemporal and the temporal respectively. "The Other," as the introjected, enigmatic signifiers constituting the kernels of the unconscious, is the exteriority frozen within the architecture of a psychical interior. Translation, as the repetitive attempts at removing the provocative enigma of the Other's desire, is the temporal dynamic generating the associative chains and libidinal concatenations interpreted by analysis.

Laplanche believes that this distinction between the timeless Other and the temporal translations of this alterity solves the problems stemming from Freud's unreserved expulsion of time from the unconscious. Laplanche perceives the problem as one of a conflict between two approaches to psychoanalytic temporality—"determinism" and "hermeneutics." On this view, Freud's general tendency is to support a deterministic model of human time: The repressed past dominates and overdetermines the field of the conscious, experiential present. Against this, Laplanche claims to offer a hermeneutic model: As in screen memories, the present and past dialectically interact with each other and, in this process, mutually metamorphose. The unconscious labor of translating the enigmatic messages of others introduces the temporal dimension supposedly lacking in Freud:

> Between determinism and hermeneutics, what is the contribution of the concept of the enigmatic message and the correlative concept of translation? With the *message,* there is the idea that an existing, pre-existing sense is offered to the subject, of which, however, he is not the master and of which he can become the master only by submitting to it. With the concept of *enigma,* a break in determinism appears: to the extent that the originator of the enigmatic message is unaware of most of what he means, and to the extent that the child possesses only inadequate and imperfect ways to configure or theorize about what is communicated to him, there can be no linear causality between the parental unconscious

> and discourse on the one hand and what the child does with these on the other . . . the profound reshaping, which occurs between the two . . . may be likened to a metabolism that breaks down food into its constituent parts and reassembles them into a completely different entity. (Laplanche 1999d, 160)

Laplanche's challenge to Freudian determinism has less to do with temporality and more to do with a strategy analogous to Derrida's use of the notion of "dissemination."[34] Since the "message" qua enigmatic signifier (itself not mastered by its "author," namely, the adult with his/her own unconscious) is inevitably decoded by the "reader" (the child's unconscious) in an unpredictable, unique manner, the determining force of the repressed past isn't amenable to visualization in terms of linear causality.[35]

Laplanche's theory of enigmatic signifiers is plagued by the same difficulties as Freud's denial of a temporal unconscious. Freud is trapped in an ambiguous straddling of two incommensurable positions: On the one hand, the unconscious is ignorant of time; and, on the other hand, the unconscious is fixated upon the deterministic distant past in such a way that it lends less significance to the recent past and/or to present contexts. As with the death drive, Freud's equivocations between (timeless) repetition and (temporal) regression reflect this unresolved problem. If the unconscious is truly timeless, then it shouldn't be capable of recognizing any chronological differences between the mnemic traces forming its content. This would therefore imply the possibility of nonhierarchized interactions between representations being the paradigm of unconscious processes. (For example, the dream-work's refusal to respect linear time would enable such materials as day-residues to have an influence equal to earlier memories.) And yet, if the past is indeed disproportionately determinative of the psyche, then the unconscious does actually recognize hierarchical differences between the ideational elements structuring its formations—earlier traces perhaps bear a "time stamp" granting them comparatively dominant functional roles (relative to more recent traces) in unconscious configurations.

Similarly, Laplanche struggles to establish a difference-in-kind between two sets of ideational representations, instead of differentiating between a timeless energy and a temporalized order of representations.[36] Certain mnemic traces are frozen in the development of the psychical subject. Invariably, these fixations occur during childhood, when the individual is vulnerable and unprepared for the intrusion of adult sexuality. Later mnemic traces—at least those having any significance for analytic interpretation—are determined as translations of these introjected, immobile points of reference. Consequently, Laplanche requires exactly the

same type of tacit recognition of chronological time as Freud: The unconscious can and does grasp linear time to the extent that it fixes the traces of the (infantile) past, refusing to submit these traces to the same shifting alterations as subsequent traces. All that Laplanche really says is that a given unconscious time-line (the trajectory of "translation") examined by the analyst has a specific origin—namely, a privileged representation continually reinsinuating itself in future contextual frameworks. Freud implies that the time of which the unconscious is ignorant is linear, chronological time. Laplanche inadvertently makes this time—what Derrida, discussing Freud, calls the "vulgar conception of time"—into his temporal theory of the unconscious. Laplanche's valorization of the archaeological motif in describing the analyst's search for the synchronic enigmatic signifiers at play in the analysand's diachronically unfolding associations reveals this favoring of the deterministic past.[37]

Additionally, from the perspective of the psychoanalytic theory of *Trieb,* Laplanche's contention that some representations are exempted from the temporalization reigning at subsequent phases of psychical life is dangerous. From the outset of his drive theory in 1905, Freud forcefully posits that the drive-object—and, later, the aims and representations at play in the libidinal economy—is utterly contingent. Hence, loss, displacement, and substitution, which are all arguably temporal in a general sense, are vital to psychoanalytic drive theory. Without this postulate, conceptual cornerstones of analysis like sublimation and object-choice are at risk of being invalidated in favor of a slightly refined version of an instinctual model. In fact, Laplanche's arguments, instead of opening up a third path "between determinism and hermeneutics," merely present a deterministic paradigm with slightly wider parameters. Perhaps the specific objects fixated on as enigmatic signifiers in early childhood aren't absolutely determined, but the occurrence of an unalterable object-fixation is necessary in Laplanche's account. (Although not biologically fixed, Laplanche's drive-objects are historically fixed.)[38] And, Laplanche even specifies that these frozen representations are invariably derived from a limited range of body parts, namely, adult erogenous zones prominent in the (m)other's unconscious sexual life.[39]

Regarding the drive, Laplanche transforms the enigmatic signifier into a more specific form—the "source-object." He attempts to deconstruct Freud's distinction between the drive-source and the drive-object. This amounts to a conflation of the energetic or economic level of description with the representational or topographical one. (Funnily enough, Laplanche elsewhere considers the separation of economically quantified affect and topographically defined representation to be crucial in analytic theory.)[40] As the problems arising from Freud's sometimes contradictory

claims about the death drive indicate, the timeless dimension of *Trieb* is best viewed as a reflection of the energetic drive-source. Although the aims and objects at play in the drive are contingent and malleable (thus varying over time), the recurrent demand for discharge (the source and its accompanying pressure) is the specific aspect of drive indifferent to the temporal succession of distinct cathexes. (Ricoeur correctly identifies the drive-object as "a variable in an economic function,"[41] the drive-source being the economic constant in relation to this variable.) Consequently, Laplanche is not even successful at being faithful to the basic axioms of Freudian thought. How can an object-representation carry with it an inherent quota of energetic charge? Doesn't this imply, despite Laplanche's stress on the disseminatory effects of the enigmatic message, a kind of direct transmission between the parental other's libidinal cathexes of objects and those coordinates structuring the child's nascent unconscious? Isn't this just as suspect as the Freudian speculations about phylogenetic heritage (or, worse, Jungian musings about a collective unconscious)?

Laplanche goes so far as to collapse three of the four metapsychological subcategories of *Trieb* into each other. He posits the existence of an "object-aim-source" of the drive, to be treated as a single unity—"The source is, in the end, an object-aim-source" (Laplanche 1980c, 66). This move would result in a recapitulation of the untenable contradictions plaguing Freud's final version of his drive theory. If one retains the death drive (which Laplanche does), then one would have to speak of death as a literal aim and/or object of the drive. This would then entail the significant problem of treating death as a cathected representation—a "state" from past "experience"—in the psychical apparatus. (During the formulation of his metapsychology prior to the introduction of the *Todestrieb,* Freud stringently rejects this possibility.) Laplanche says that, "The source is more difficult to situate in sexuality" (Laplanche 1980c, 51). Considering the death drive's affinity with the traits of the drive-source, what makes situating the source so difficult is the fact that it cannot be readily treated as one unconscious representation among others.

Gilles Deleuze clarifies precisely what is required by both Freud and Laplanche insofar as they each advocate, whether they are aware of it or not, a deterministic conception of the unconscious—"The whole theory of repetition is . . . subordinated to the requirements of simple representation . . . Repetition is subjected to a principle of identity in the former present and a rule of resemblance in the present one" (Deleuze 1994, 104). With Freud's understanding of repetition as characteristic of an essential conservatism coextensive with the concept of *Trieb,* the "earliest state of affairs" sought through the defiles of sublimation requires an ability of the drive and/or the unconscious to recognize this represented past

as distinct from everything associated with it subsequently. Likewise, in demanding a difference-in-kind between two classes of representations—enigmatic signifiers qua source-objects versus translations qua symptomatic signifieds—Laplanche assumes that early mnemic traces possess differentiating features distinguishing them from subsequent traces. The "principle of identity" to which Deleuze alludes is this foundational assumption justifying the conception of deterministic presentations in contrast with determined representations. Chronological priority is intrinsic to this principle in Freud and Laplanche.

Although left in an ambiguous state, Lacan's various musings on temporality do not so clearly devolve upon an ultimate privileging of a deterministic past. Lacan appears indecisive in choosing whether or not to proclaim the unconscious to be fundamentally regressive or atemporal. In, for instance, the even-and-odd game from the second seminar, Lacan seemingly offers a form–content distinction permitting a juxtaposition of timelessness and temporality within the register of the unconscious. The chains of signifiers unfurling themselves in the associational networks uncovered by analytic interpretation are the temporal contents of the unconscious. The laws arising from these diachronic concatenations—that is, the rules explaining prior groupings of binary sequences as well as constraining possible future groupings—are the atemporal forms of the unconscious. However, this cursory sketch is much too simple.

Actually, through the even-and-odd game, Lacan succeeds in short-circuiting precisely this sort of form–content distinction. Although, on one level, the signifying chains and the resulting laws do indeed parallel the categories of diachronic content and synchronic form respectively, this is only one side of the coin. On another level, the signifiers of the unconscious are responsible for the indestructible timelessness of the unconscious. The rules genetically immanent to the series of signifying units would, on this other level, be considered temporal (as analytic a posteriori functions). Lacan's notion of *remémoration* reminds one that the unconscious's atemporal retention of multiple traces is supported by an "external" (or, "extimate") support; what the Imaginary ego forgets, the Symbolic signifier remembers. The initial poles of the unrefined form–content distinction overshadow a duality internal to each pole. Signifiers, as the "content" of the unconscious, are simultaneously temporal (they occur in diachronic sequences, and are subject to retroactive alterations through the dynamic of the *point de capiton)* and timeless (they serve to eternalize memory through being ineradicable, iterable inscriptions). Correspondingly, the laws of the unconscious, as its "form," are both temporal (they are generated and modified by the contingencies of the diachronic sequences inscribed in the unconscious) and timeless (once on-

togenetically generated, they thereafter become the rules synchronically governing the subsequent trajectory of signifying chains).

Lacanian topology can be similarly reassessed in this light. One of the best defenses of Lacan's employment of topology is Jeanne Granon-Lafont's *La topologie ordinaire de Jacques Lacan*. In a discussion of the Moebius band, Granon-Lafont calls attention to the fact that two distinctive qualities of these bands emerge, depending on whether one takes into account the factor of movement over time:

> Only a temporal event differentiates the back and the front, which are separated by the time of making an additional turn. The dichotomy between the two notions, the back and the front, doesn't reappear except at the price of the intervention of a new dimension, namely, a temporal dimension. Time, as continuous, produces the difference between the two faces. If there are no longer two measures for the surface, but instead a single edge, then time is essential in order to render account of the band. (Granon-Lafont 1985, 30)

What implications does Granon-Lafont's clarification entail? Topological figures such as the Moebius band allow Lacan to subvert the intuitive recourse to depth psychology triggered by certain Freudian descriptions of the unconscious. Lacan maintains that the unconscious is not a container or cavity in the typical, spatial sense. This kind of depth can be modeled with the two-dimensional space of plane geometry—outside–inside, enclosure–exclusion, and so on. Granon-Lafont points out that the difference between geometry and topology lies in topology taking into account the third dimension of time.[42] The surfaces dealt with by topologists are surfaces set in motion, surfaces that unfold themselves in time as fundamentally continuous and of a single piece—"Time, from a topological point of view, is the dimension of space considered as flat, as surface" (Granon-Lafont 1985, 15).

With the Moebius band, an apparently double-sided surface—that is, conscious versus unconscious—is, in actuality, an illusory façade belonging to a single surface.[43] From a Lacanian perspective, the unconscious "ex-sists" only insofar as it remains inextricably bound up with elements immanent to the field of consciousness. Consequently, for example, Lacan asserts that repression is always the return of the repressed—"repression and the return of the repressed are the same thing" (*SI,* 191). Approached from this angle, perhaps the unconscious is timeless for Lacan exclusively when treated in isolation from its structural entanglement with consciousness—that is, when the Moebius band is fixed in place, when psychoanalytic metapsychology wishes to handle the psy-

chical apparatus in terms of ideally separated topographical systems. However, the "real" unconscious—the sole actuality of the unconscious is contingent upon it having an integral function within the limits of conscious experience—is always–already temporalized. And yet, Lacan's oscillations in relation to this issue make these remarks a matter of mere speculation. (Colette Soler and John Forrester both suggest that Lacan seeks a compromise between Freud's timeless unconscious and the "dialectical time of the signifier.")[44]

At present, psychoanalysis is internally divided according to two implicit temporal models yet to be reconciled with each other.[45] On the one hand, analytic theory promotes a rather straightforward determinism: What occurs during childhood has an inordinately greater effect on subject-formation than later experience. This determinism relies on nothing more than a chronological time line coupled with an unconscious incapable of selective amnesia. On the other hand, certain theoretical devices from Lacan and Laplanche claim to present a second-order form of temporality: With the *point de capiton* and the *après-coup,* Freud's linear determinism is combined with a retroactive process of rewriting the past. Both Lacan and Laplanche accept, at a certain basic level, the deterministic model of Freud. Nonetheless, they each assert that, although the past shapes the present, the present also alters the past after the fact. For Laplanche, this retroaction effect is clearly subsumed under a larger deterministic framework; at its core, the past, as constituted by enigmatic signifiers, cannot be altered by the work of translation thus set in motion. With Lacan, there are times when he seems willing to go so far as to liquidate any fixed past vis-à-vis the temporal fluctuation engendered by the "play of signifiers."

Why is a resolution of these inconsistencies in analytic metapsychology important? What exactly is at stake? Veering too far toward a universalization of retroactive temporality risks destroying what Lacan calls the "fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis"—the unconscious, repetition, transference, and the drive. To greater or lesser degrees, all of these concepts rely on the notion that an insistent recurrence of the past continually disrupts the field of consciousness in the present. If the backward glance of the present is permitted carte blanche to revise the past, then no past would ex-sist to return. But, simply leaving psychoanalysis reliant upon a linear time model is also undesirable. Not only would this impede it in explaining a range of specific clinical phenomena—the dream-work, the plasticity of memory, substitutive object-choice, and so on—but would risk erasing much of what is most revolutionary about psychoanalysis in the history of ideas.

Again, *Trieb* is the best example of an analytic conceptual locus

wherein these temporal paradigms collide. When Freud presents the death drive as a nostalgic repetition compulsion fixated upon returning to an earlier state of affairs, he clearly gives determinism the upper hand in the final drive theory. In the early years of his work, Freud acknowledges that drives are incredibly flexible, capable of a virtually infinite series of displacements and alterations. Near the end, Freud asserts that these apparent changes are superficial: At a more foundational level, the drive always seeks the same thing, namely, returning to the "inorganic state." This fixation becomes the very essence of drive:

> Let us suppose . . . that all the organic instincts are conservative, are acquired historically and tend towards the restoration of an earlier state of things. It follows that the phenomena of organic development must be attributed to external disturbing and diverting influences. The elementary living entity would from its very beginning have had no wish to change; if conditions remained the same, it would do no more than constantly repeat the same course of life . . . Every modification which is thus imposed upon the course of the organism's life is accepted by the conservative organic instincts and stored up for further repetition. Those instincts are therefore bound to give a deceptive appearance of being forces tending towards change and progress, whilst in fact they are merely seeking to reach an ancient goal by paths alike old and new. Moreover it is possible to specify this final goal of all organic striving. (*SE* 18: 37–38)

In passages such as this, Freud undeniably favors a biological essentialization of *Trieb*. With the final version of the drive theory, psychoanalysis claims to have located a "final goal of all organic striving." The plasticity of the drives described in Freud's early texts is downplayed in being replaced by an invariable libidinal monotony. What remains is an unswerving organic tendency to restore a state of absolute rest. Everything defining *Trieb* as a unique concept is dismissed as a "deceptive appearance." Biological instincts and their corresponding chronological determinism lie beneath this "illusion" of libidinal multiplicity/heterogeneity.

At the other extreme, an unreserved extension of what Laplanche designates as the hermeneutic model of psychoanalytic temporality would likewise endanger the conceptual integrity of *Trieb*. In terms of libidinal cathexes, Freud accumulates an overwhelming amount of evidence that certain traits, features, and circumstances recur throughout the array of an individual's object-choices and modes of comportment. Interlinking patterns continually emerge out of what the patient takes to be a series of arbitrary conscious decisions unrelated to each other. Similarly, an entire

intersubjective template gels around the figure of the analyst in the formation of the transference. What's more, analysands suffer from symptomatic compulsions overriding their volition and sense of self-control. In all these instances, an undigested, extimate past repeatedly disturbs the balance of the conscious present. Certainly, drives are modified by their continual recontextualization within later frameworks—for example, whether originating in the Oedipal family or in society as a whole, the prohibitions characterizing "reality" force a rearrangement of previous libidinal organizations. But, psychoanalysis is also a theoretical system in which a nondialecticized "pound of flesh" eludes the dialecticized, hermeneutic interaction between past and present. That is, *Trieb* is *both* temporal and timeless.

## §17 The Missing Split—The Metapsychological Structure of *Trieb*

In his rush to refute Jung with the dualistic drive theory of the second topography, Freud neglects explicitly integrating it with the metapsychological definition of drive put forward in 1915. The ambiguous relationship between the death drive and the metapsychological structure of drive results in numerous paradoxes plaguing the notion of the *Todestrieb*. At the most basic level, what does "Drives and Their Vicissitudes" say about *Trieb*? The definition of drive outlines a compound formation consisting of source, pressure, aim, and object. Drives are not some internal biological reality welling up from the chaotic depths of the id. The aims and objects forming an integral pole of the drive are not the result of a pre-given natural telos. Nor are drives merely an external social construction. The unmasterable "demand for work" cyclically reiterated by the source and pressure of *Trieb* renders dubious any efforts to transform human motivation into a simple consequence of intersubjective, sociohistorical mediation.

Freud's 1915 strategy of locating the drives "on the frontier between the mental and the somatic" is perhaps his finest formulation regarding the uniqueness of the concept of *Trieb*. Psychoanalysis deals neither with purely organic forces nor with simple socio-ideational constructions.[46] Unfortunately, nearly every school of psychoanalytic thought thus far has sought to rectify what has been erroneously perceived as a provisional ambiguity in Freud. Invoking the later Freud, some argue that the somatic holds the genuine key to unlocking the mysteries behind the unconscious. Others, basing themselves on either Freudo-Marxism or a de-

graded version of Lacanian theory, wish to eliminate the somatic altogether. Individuals from this camp never tire of reiterating the assertion that psychoanalysis has nothing whatsoever to do with anything even remotely biological. In either case, a productive middle ground alluded to by Freud as lying in the gap between the categories of the psychical and the somatic is unproductively foreclosed by a false "either/or" in the disputes between two extreme positions.

One of the reasons why *Trieb* remains a relatively underdeveloped concept is that it tends to be treated as nothing more than another occasion for rehashing nature-versus-nurture sorts of debates—for pitting biological determinism against social constructivism. Drive theory is thereby deprived of its specificity in being reduced to a mere micro-level instantiation of these familiar macro-level controversies. The whole point of the prior Kantian-style deontologization of metapsychology is to short circuit this type of treatment of drive, to suspend or hold in abeyance the tendency to approach drives from the angle of inquiries regarding their fundamental ontological status—questions concerning the nature or essence of drives in terms of their substantial being: Are they grounded in a bodily or a social substance? That is to say, by insisting upon the fundamentally regulative status of *Trieb,* queries bearing upon the ontological foundations of the libidinal economy can be put to the side in favor of different kinds of investigations. The key question does not invariably have to be: What are drives? It also merits asking: How do drives work? What's more, the Kantianism employed here is of a strategic sort; this deontologization of the metapsychological field is intended as a temporary gesture, as the holding open of a crucial window of opportunity through which can be glimpsed new insights into the logic and dynamics of the libidinal economy. Once this Kantian move has achieved its results, a return to philosophical speculations bearing upon the ontology of *Trieb* need not be ruled out. (However, within the limits of strictly psychoanalytic experience—instead of within the wider parameters of a philosophical appropriation of psychoanalytic metapsychology—one could argue that the Kantian critical apparatus still furnishes the most fitting framework: Analysts are not principally concerned, in their capacity as analysts, with the ontological status of the metapsychological entities the presupposition of which permits the interpretive labor of analytic reason; and, the psychoanalytic clinic itself abstains from passing verdicts concerning the ultimate, extra-analytic being of the phenomena it addresses.) In short, the recourse to Kant helps to reveal a split running through the structure of *Trieb*—an inner antagonism necessarily ignored by debates seeking to settle once and for all what the sole substance is of which the drives are supposedly composed. (Not only does the Kantian "bracketing" of meta-

psychological entities as regulative rather than constitutive enable a productive bypassing of certain debates, but Kant's treatment of temporality in relation to the split between noumenality and phenomenality is especially useful in understanding the nature of the tension perturbing the drives from within.) The very way in which the questions posed to drive theory by those embroiled in nature-versus-nurture disputes are framed precludes discerning this internal division—drives are ontologically heterogeneous, rather than homogenous. (Hence, no single answer exists to the question: What are drives?)

Regarding the overall place of the drives, Freud consistently preserves, during both the first and second topographies, the dualism between the pleasure and reality principles. Drives are always found to be in conflict with an external world containing barriers to libidinal satisfaction. But, regarding the drives themselves, Freud alters the applicable conflict model. Just prior to 1920, a single libidinal energy is differentiated depending on whether it is narcissistically invested in the ego (ego-libido) or anaclitically in other objects (object-libido). With the fall of the pleasure principle's primacy, an almost mythical antagonism between the life drives of *Eros* and the death drives of *Thanatos* becomes a theoretical cornerstone of Freudian thought.

Ricoeur observes that the *Eros–Todestrieb* dualism admits of being viewed as a temporal conflict. The forward-looking *Eros,* seeking to perpetuate life through sexual coupling, pulls in the opposite direction of the conservative, atemporal death drive(s). Ricoeur's description of Freud's final drive conflict is best illustrated by the picture of someone desperately trying to swim to shore, but nonetheless being dragged back out to sea by an inexorable undertow. The life drives struggle to achieve their aim, but nonetheless inadvertently move along a regressive trajectory mapped out in advance by *Thanatos:*

> [T]here exists a mutual harmony and a close affinity between this theme of death-dealing repetition, introduced into the theory at a late date, and all the other forms of archaism. Repetition was already a theme during the period of *The Interpretation of Dreams,* when analysis discovered, beneath the disguises of dreams, 'our earliest wishes,' 'the indestructibility of desire'; repetition is again expressed in all the returns, sublime or not, to narcissism; from *Totem and Taboo* to *Moses and Monotheism* the theme is repetition: man is drawn backward by an agency that constantly draws him away from his childhood desires. The process of temporalization, in which the conscious system ultimately consists, unfolds in a direction opposite to a timelessness which is instinctual in nature, or rather, as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* would put it, in opposition to an

> impulse that may be correctly described as detemporalizing. Such is no doubt the most striking transcription we can make of that 'battle of the giants' which Freud places under the double emblem of Eros and death. If one interrelates all these modalities of archaism, there is formed the complex figure of a destiny in reverse, a destiny that draws one backwards . . . (Ricoeur 1970, 452)

Ricoeur sketches the contours of a productive path that will be followed out to its logical conclusions in this project. The problem with his remarks is that he fails to understand that the simple dualism of Freud's *Eros–Thanatos* myth is so questionable as to be unsustainable from a metapsychological perspective. The strongest version of the death drive resides in its universalization in relation to all drives. The death drive is not a distinct drive or class of drives clashing head on with an entirely separate group of drives. Compulsive repetition and negative affects are traits of drives in general. Freud (and, here, Ricoeur) ignores the possibility that there exists *a temporal conflict internal to the very metapsychological structure of each and every drive.*

It is not being denied that Freud discovers a profound conflict at the heart of libidinal existence: He is quite justified in questioning the hegemony of the pleasure principle; explaining away every manifestation of human misery via the supposition of an invariable unconscious gain of pleasure is highly suspect. Rather, the contention that the death drive is a distinct drive capable of being treated as separate from other drives is precisely what deserves to be rejected. The traits of the *Todestrieb* are found in all drives:

> In fact what Freud was explicitly seeking to express by the term 'death instinct' was the most fundamental aspect of instinctual life: the return to an earlier state . . . What is designated here is more than any particular *type* of instinct—it is rather that factor which determines the actual *principle* of all instinct. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 102)

Thus, Laplanche affirms that, "the death drive is the soul of every drive . . . it's the most driving aspect of the drive" (Laplanche 1980c, 215). The task yet to be accomplished is the integration of the final drive theory with the 1915 metapsychological schematization of the inherent, transcendental arrangement of drive structure. If the death drive is a feature of all drives, then where does it stand in relation to source, pressure, aim, and object? Is it internal to each of these four components, or only to some of them? How does it express itself within this compound organization?

The early Lacan explicitly rejects Freud's elevation of the traits of

the *Todestrieb* to the status of a distinct drive in and of itself. In 1938, Lacan states:

> That the tendency to death is lived by men as the object of an appetite is a reality that analysis discovers at every level of the psyche. It fell to the inventor of psychoanalysis to recognize the irreducible character of this reality, but the explanation he gave it of a death instinct, startlingly brilliant though it is, is nevertheless self-contradictory; it remains true that genius itself in Freud yielded to a prejudice derived from biology that demanded that every tendency be referred to an instinct. (Lacan 2001a, 35)

The self-contradiction to which Lacan refers is no doubt the paradox of an organic instinct taking as its aim and/or object a return to inorganicity, namely, a vital force fixated upon death. Furthermore, Lacan justifiably challenges Freud's need to hastily transform every tendency into an instinct or drive. Given Lacan's criticism, a familiar question arises again: If the features of the death drive have a degree of validity in analytic thought without being indicative of an independent drive, then where are these features operative? How should the "deathly" tendency of repetition be resituated?

In a lecture discussing the evolution of Lacan's thought prior to the seminars, Jacques-Alain Miller speaks of Lacan's struggle to apprehend a relationship between two apparently separate areas—libido and language. On the side of libido, Lacan is faced with the drives and their essentially repetitive character—what could be called a "cyclical temporality." On the side of language, Lacan encounters the "dialectical play of the signifier," a "dialectical temporality" fluctuating in the balance between determinism and retroaction as the *Aufhebung* of the past in/by the present. Miller proposes that *objet petit a* is the bridge between these two halves:

> Lacan very early on divided Freud's work and the psychoanalytic field as a whole into that which is based on communication and language, on the one hand, and the libido theory, that is, metapsychology, on the other. If you approach psychoanalysis from the vantage point of language and meaning alone, you can't account for everything. The theory of sexual development, with its various stages, drives, etc., escapes your grasp . . .
>
> A fundamental problem in teaching Lacan is to always try to reformulate the theory of the drives and the libido in terms of the theory of language . . . Meaning, deciphering, and interpretation are set apart from instincts and drives.

> Lacan seemed to be asking himself whether there are in fact two different directions implicit in Freud's work and thus in psychoanalysis as a whole, or whether they are reducible to a common core; and, if so, at what cost? In what sense can drives be reduced to or inscribed within the structure of language? Lacan essentially answered with object (a). He invented it to try to integrate drives into the structure of language. (Miller 1996b, 19)

Lacan's object *a* is a split object, divided between the brute repetition of the Real, the metonymic drifting of the Imaginary, and the metaphoric displacements of the Symbolic. Object *a,* as the paradigmatic drive-object, conforms to the motif of the Borromean knot. The Lacanian strategy in resolving the deadlock of the antinomy between the two temporal dimensions of analytic theory—cyclical temporality versus dialectical temporality—is to internally divide the drive-object. A "little piece of the Real" subsists behind the shifting veil of Imaginary and Symbolic substitutes at play in the diachronic unfolding of object-choices, a Real that remains the same in all possible objects—what Žižek refers to as the Kripkean "rigid designator" aspect of the *objet petit a,* namely, what is "in the object more than the object itself."[47] The Lacanian object materializes a temporal conflict around which the entire libidinal economy of the subject revolves.

One of Žižek's reinterpretations of the Freudian death drive stems from the Millerian identification of object *a* as the juncture between two conflictual poles. The primary reason why Freud suddenly proposes a death drive, and hence dethrones the pleasure principle, is the need to explain forms of human suffering where no pleasurable gain can be discerned. Furthermore, if the death drive isn't a drive unto itself but a facet of every drive, then even those drives obeying the pleasure principle immanently contain the reasons for their own failure to achieve the objectives of this same principle:

> The hypothesis of a 'death drive' concerns directly this point: its implication is that the foreign body, the intruder which disturbs the harmonious circuit of the psychic apparatus run by the 'pleasure principle,' is not something external to it but strictly *inherent* to it: there is something in the very immanent functioning of the psyche, notwithstanding the pressure of 'external reality,' which resists full satisfaction. In other words, even if the psychic apparatus is entirely left to itself, it will not attain the balance for which the 'pleasure principle' strives, but will continue to circulate around a traumatic intruder in its interior—the limit upon which the 'pleasure principle' stumbles is internal to it. The Lacanian math-

> eme for this foreign body, for this 'internal limit,' is of course *objet petit a: objet a* is the reef, the obstacle which interrupts the closed circuit of the 'pleasure principle' and derails its balanced movement . . . (Žižek 1992a, 48)

Miller provides a similar schema in his explanation of *jouissance,* arguing that *jouissance* is an excessive surplus "affect" resulting from the intertwining of the pleasure principle's libido and the death drive:

> What name has Lacan given to this essential link between libido and death drive? He named it *jouissance.*
>
> To understand the concept of *jouissance* in Lacan as unique, is to understand that it concerns at the same time libido and death drive, and libido and aggression, not as two antagonistic forces external to each other, but as a knot forming an internal cleavage. It's the same internal cleavage Freud discovered in the economy of masochism, a pathology of pleasure in displeasure. (Miller 1992b, 25–26)

The important point here concerns the theme of an "internal cleavage" (construed as a cleavage internal to drive itself). If an admixture of libido and the death drive is at work in all drives, then *Trieb* designates an inherently self-defeating mechanism. The only difficulty with the Lacanian position, at least from a Freudian perspective, is the localization of this internal cleavage within the drive-object as *objet petit a.* The object is only one of four elements constitutive of *Trieb.* A split runs much deeper through the foundations of the drives.

The fundamental thesis of this project is that the metapsychological structure of *Trieb* is split along the lines of two irreconcilable, incompatible axes—an *axis of iteration* (source–pressure) and an *axis of alteration* (aim–object). These two axes are roughly analogous to the Kantian distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal as utilized in his exposition of why self-consciousness is shaped by its own internal conditions of (im)possibility: Fully transparent self-consciousness is impossible, in Kant's view, because the timeless subject, as the set of transcendental mechanisms making all determinate acts of consciousness possible, only ever recovers itself through the necessary distortion imposed upon it by a spatio-temporal medium, namely, phenomenal inner sense as the medium of reflective consciousness. The axis of iteration consists of the indefinitely iterated "demand for work" impinging upon the representational level of the psychical apparatus. Freud portrays the drive-source as a quasi-somatic force, whereas the drive-pressure is identified as the negative affect (anxiety and/or various states of discomfort) accompanying

the source. Freud indicates that an unmet demand for gratification issuing from the drive-source results in a corresponding registration of unpleasure. Within an axis constituted by the conjoint functioning of source and pressure, one can discern the combination of both the death drive and the unconscious's ignorance of time. Repetition compulsion and negative affect parallel source and pressure respectively. And, this half of *Trieb* is, in a certain respect, ignorant of time; regardless of changes resulting from the passage of time, the drive "eternally returns" under the sway of the axis of iteration. This could perhaps be deemed the "noumenal" axis of *Trieb.*

The axis of alteration consists of a combination of personal historical factors (including the sociocultural mediators of drives), sensory materials (mnemic traces in general), word- and/or thing-presentations, and so on. Broadly speaking, this axis is constituted by representations, whether conceived as Freudian *Vorstellungen* or Lacanian signifiers (see §30). All the effects running counter to the standard determinist paradigm of analytic theory are to be found here—sublimation, screen memories, the manifest text of the dream-work, deferred action, and the *point de capiton.* Lacan rightfully speaks of "floating signifiers" with regard to the elements caught in the dynamic processes of psychical representation: Because future modifications of the differential web of representatives active in the unconscious result in new meanings (signifieds as "values" of the signifier) being attached to the "same" signifiers, a final, determinative "sign-value" for any psychical representative never arrives.[48] The retroactive temporality highlighted by numerous authors with reference to *Nachträglichkeit* is endemic to this particular dimension of drive. This could be called the "phenomenal" axis of *Trieb.* Differentiating this axis, with its temporal features, from the axis of iteration, with its cyclical (a)temporality, permits finally assigning both the determinist and hermeneutic models—models left unreconciled in prior analytic theory—to their proper places.

Like Kantian self-consciousness, the drives, thus divided along lines similar to the noumenal–phenomenal dehiscence, are structurally condemned to failure. The axis of iteration's demand for a pure repetition unaffected by temporal mediation can never be satisfied, since it necessarily passes through the matrix of the axis of alteration's temporal processes—"repetition is a vain effort to stay, indeed, to reverse time; such repetition reveals a rancor against the present which feeds upon itself" (Butler 1990, 272). In *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud asks why human beings seem perpetually dissatisfied with their existence. He answers by claiming that the conflict between drives and the (social) reality principle requires a mandatory "instinctual renunciation."[49] Each indi-

vidual, from the moment she/he is assimilated into the family unit onward, must surrender a quota of libidinal satisfaction in order to occupy his/her position in civilization. (In a similar and now famous thesis, Lévi-Strauss maintains that the basic feature defining human civilization is the prohibition against incest.)[50]

Without necessarily rejecting outright the Freudian hypothesis of instinctual renunciation, it must be affirmed that *a discontent prior to civilization* exists. Even before examining the sociocultural circumstances of humanity so as to deduce the balance established between drives and regulated intersubjective relations, the metapsychological structure of *Trieb* as a "split drive" partially answers the question as to why a perpetual margin of dissatisfaction haunts humanity. How is *Trieb* inherently self-defeating? The axis of iteration insists on an unaltered repetition of an initial satisfaction—a satisfaction whose first experience catalyzes the cathexes inaugurating the very existence of a drive per se. The axis of alteration is a structurally intrinsic facet of drive through which the demands of the axis of iteration are necessarily routed. However, since the representational components of the axis of alteration are subject to modification by temporal factors, a pure, undiluted repetition of the initial satisfaction sought by the axis of iteration is, strictly speaking, impossible.

Returning to the familiar example of the maternal breast, the oral drive is created by virtue of the object cathexis that develops apropos the initial satisfying encounter. When first experienced as a gratifying thing (during early infancy), it may reasonably be speculated that the phenomenological dimension of the experience of the breast qua object is considerably different than the experience of the "same" object after a certain period of time passes: Especially given that psychoanalysis posits a genetic subject as an axiomatic component of its theoretical architecture, the experiences of the breast at different times result in two essentially different "objects." In early infancy, prior to the onset of anything like a subject–object demarcation, the breast is not registered as being a separate/separable object belonging to another subject. Later, the breast, although recoverable in a physical sense, is a "lost object" since it becomes a severed representation of something belonging to another. That is to say, the later experience of the "same" breast is phenomenally different than the original experience of this object. An irreducible margin of difference compromises the iterability of the initial object cathexis.

The "deathly" side of this oral drive is the axis of iteration's insistence on a recovery of the initial version of the object as experienced prior to the gestation of the inner–outer, me versus not-me dichotomy. However, this demand is impossible to fulfill since the temporal dynamics at work in the axis of alteration insure the inevitable loss of all originary cathexes.

Apart from this brief phenomenological account of the splitting of the drive, the sociosymbolic matrix of the Oedipal complex, as a paradigmatic emblem of the general antagonism between drives and reality, acts upon the axis of alteration. The *Non-du-Père* is an aim-inhibition applying itself to an object-choice (in this case, the maternal breast). As such, even if the breast were miraculously to remain the same in its phenomenal characteristics, fundamental prohibitions of initial drive cathexes guarantee the object-loss observed by Freud as early as 1905. And yet, the source and pressure—the axis of iteration—refuse to acknowledge the irrational futility of this unfulfillable demand for an exact reduplication of earlier states of affairs; they remain ignorant of the alterations wrought by the passage of time. Hence, *Trieb* itself is its own guarantee of discontent.

Lacan expresses something similar in his fourteenth seminar. He directly addresses the connections in Freudian theory between repetition and pleasure:

> [T]he maintenance of the least tension, as pleasure principle, in no way implies repetition. On the contrary, the rediscovery of a pleasure situation in its sameness can only be the source of operations that are always more costly, than simply following the angle of the least tension. By following it like an isothermic line, if I can express myself in this way, it will finish up indeed by leading, from pleasure situation to pleasure situation, to the desired maintenance of the least tension. If it implies some buckling or some return, this can only be along the path, as I might say, of an external structure, which is not at all unthinkable, since I evoked earlier the existence of an isothermic line. It is not at all in this way and from outside that the existence of the *Zwang* is implicated in the Freudian *Wiederholung*, in repetition. (*SXIV,* 2/15/67)

Lacan continues:

> A situation which is repeated, as a failure situation, for example, implies co-ordinates not of the greater or lesser tension, but of signifying identity of the plus or minus as *sign* of what *must* be repeated. But this sign was not carried as such by the first situation. You should clearly understand that this was not marked by the sign of repetition, otherwise, it would not have been the first! Much more, it must be said that it becomes—that it *becomes*—the repeated situation and that, by that fact, it is *lost* as originating situation: that *there is something lost by the fact of repetition*. And this is not alone perfectly articulated in Freud, but he articulated it *well before* having been brought to this statement of the 'Beyond of the pleasure principle.'

> From the *Three Essays on Sexuality* on, we see there arising an impossible, the principle of rediscovery. The simple approach of clinical experience had already suggested to Freud the discovery and the function of the fact that there is, in the metabolism of drives, this function of the lost object as such. (*SXIV,* 2/15/67)

Lacan's argument rests on a logicostructural claim about repetition. For example, "A" stands for the originary experience/object to be repeated—the inaugural point of drive cathexis, situated at the origin of the axis of alteration. "A" remains the unique experience or object that it is only at the moment of its occurrence. As soon as a repetition of "A" follows at a later moment, an implicit difference is marked between "A" and "$A^1$" (further repetitions generate "$A^2$", "$A^3$," and so on). The singularity of "A," untainted by the margins of difference introduced through the diachronous "$A^1$," "$A^2$ . . ." sequence, is what Lacan identifies as "*something lost by the fact of repetition*":

> [I]n this repetition itself, there is produced something which is a defect, a failure . . . By virtue of the fact that it is explicitly repeated as such, that it is marked by repetition, what is repeated can be nothing other, as compared to what it is repeating, than in a state of loss (*en perte*). Losing whatever you wish . . . there is something that is a loss. As regards this loss, from the beginning . . . Freud insists that, in repetition itself, there is a waste of enjoyment. It is here that the function of the lost object takes its origin in the Freudian discourse. (*SXVII,* 51)

Because the axis of iteration demands a repetition of "A," it invariably gets entangled in the inherent structural alteration of this initial point by virtue of the very effects of the repetition demanded—"The key to this insistence in repetition is that in its essence repetition as repetition of the symbolic sameness is impossible" (Lacan 1970, 192).[51] The Lacanian theme of "lack" and its role in sustaining the perpetual returning of restless desire can be understood as the (temporal) gap internal to both the differential features of repetition itself as well as to the conflict between the two halves of *Trieb* (see §§31–32).

In a discussion of the death drive, Deleuze refers to the discrepancy between the unconditional injunction for an "eternal return" and the intrinsic thwarting of this injunction by time itself:

> [T]he death instinct reveals an unconditional truth hidden in its 'other' face—namely, the eternal return in so far as this does not cause everything to come back but, on the contrary, affects a world which has rid

> itself of the default of the condition and the equality of the agent in order to affirm only the excessive and the unequal, the interminable and the incessant, the formless as the product of the most extreme formality. This is how the story of time ends: by undoing its too well centered natural or physical circle and forming a straight line which then, led by its own length, reconstitutes an eternally decentered circle. (Deleuze 1994, 115)

In identifying the death drive as a description of the axis of iteration, Deleuze's "eternally decentered circle" metaphorically captures the interminable struggle between the two drive axes, a conflict internal to the essence of *Trieb* itself. Moreover, Deleuze is right to see this as a "story of time." The intrinsic fissuring of drive is an outcome of two temporal configurations—a cyclical temporality forcefully ignoring chronological sequences, and a bidirectional temporality involving fluctuating interactions between temporal orders. Examining *Trieb* from a temporal angle has the advantage of preserving the "in-between" status of drive, a concept designating neither a purely biological substratum nor a superficial social construction—"The drive, in a word, just by itself, designates the conjunction of logic and corporeality" (*SXVI,* 3/12/69).

Before proceeding further, it must be made quite clear what problems this project does not choose to address. To begin with, drive is dealt with as a singular and general metapsychological concept. As such, debates about how many different kinds of drives there are, or discussions of the libidinal stages and the relative merits of developmental models, will not be an area of immediate concern. If metapsychology contains the conceptual possibility conditions for the psychoanalytic field, then an investigation into the inherent structural organization of *Trieb* has procedural priority over proclamations about specific traits and subdivisions of this fundamental concept.

Secondly, this project does not directly examine the sociohistorical circumstances surrounding the manifestations of drives. It will readily be granted that these circumstances concretely impact the libidinal psyches of individuals. To argue otherwise would be absurd. However, the only extent to which this topic is of interest at the metapsychological level is in the broad terms of "reality principle," "aim-inhibition," and so on—namely, those intervening factors participating in the axis of alteration's mediating interference with the axis of iteration. The specific cultural forms that such interfering factors take on merits an investigation conducted on a different level than this one. Furthermore, the claims of, for example, a particular Marxist reception of Freud are revealed to be a utopianism licensed by an ignorance of the nonhistoricized, self-defeating nature of

*Trieb*. Even if prohibitions specific to a particular social arrangement like capitalism are lifted, the achievement of a full satisfaction through a messianically anticipated "living out of the drives" in an alternative social system yet-to-come is a fantasy veiling the eternally necessary failure of the drives.

6

# The Unfolding of the Freudian Drive

## §18 *Trieb und Instinkt*—A Unique Contribution of Psychoanalysis

The word "drive" does not appear in the English translation of Freud's *Gesammelten Werken*. Instead, "instinct" is used in its place. As numerous commentators have noted, Freud employs *Trieb,* and not *Instinkt,* to designate the psychoanalytic theory of those forces molding the motivations of the psychical apparatus. Is this really so important? Is Strachey's translation that objectionable? If so, what is at stake in distinguishing drive from instinct?

Lacan adamantly insists that Freud's thought remains unintelligible so long as one fails to recognize the difference between *Trieb* and *Instinkt.*[1] He stringently denies that psychoanalysis has anything whatsoever to do with instincts—"the unconscious as instinct . . . has nothing to do with the Freudian unconscious . . . *have you ever, for a single moment, the feeling that you are handling the clay of instinct?*" (*SXI,* 126). Elsewhere, Lacan states that, "the drive—the Freudian drive—has nothing to do with instinct (none of Freud's expressions allows for confusion)" (Lacan 1996, 417). To properly evaluate a position such as Lacan's, some preliminary remarks are necessary on the psychoanalytic conception of the instinct–drive distinction. Lacan is correct that rendering *Trieb* as "instinct" is a regrettable error in the translation of Freud. However, the complete denial of all features pertaining to instinct (and here Lacan has the biological notion of instinct in mind) as having a role in the Freudian unconscious might be too extreme, too sweeping. In fact, Lacan's own definition of "need"—as part of the need–demand–desire triad—preserves a decisively biological, physicomaterial dimension in analytic theory (see §23).

Perhaps the best way to set about outlining the rudiments of the

instinct–drive distinction is to begin with the definition of instinct. This brief exposition of instinct limits itself to being a presentation of how instinct is portrayed by psychoanalysis, that is, as a foil for drive. Given the vastness of the topic itself—the historical career of the notion of instinct as well as the volume of literature generated in various fields apropos this notion is mind boggling—no concise summary of the notion of instinct can claim to be satisfactory. Nonetheless, since the main concern of this project is reshaping the conception of drive in the Freudian field, a cursory sketch of instinct in contradistinction from drive must suffice.

Psychoanalysis is not biology pursued by other means. Although Freud sometimes expresses a yearning for biological confirmations of his analytic theories,[2] he nonetheless resists the temptation to make the psychical apparatus ultimately answerable to the anatomical, chemical, or neurological workings of the body. Biological confirmation functions in a messianic capacity for Freud—in a future yet-to-come, science will vindicate the findings of analytic investigation. Thus, instinct, to the extent that it implies the dominance of innate physical programs ruling the individual human organism, cannot serve as the foundation of Freud's extant explanation of the unconscious forces dominating mental life. Specifically, the biological conception of instinct displays four facets pertinent to its distinction from *Trieb*—a genetic inherency, a self-preservative character, an invariability of goal, and an automaticity of functional enactment.

First, instincts are behavioral patterns universally manifested in all members of a given species. In other words, they are genetically hardwired for each and every organism of a given type. As such, the only level at which instincts are historicized to any degree might be the macro-scale chronology of evolutionary time (in Freudian parlance, a "physical phylogenetic heritage"). In general, though, instincts are remarkably resistant to historicization—specifically, contextual modification at the ontogenetic level. In fact, in order for them to function in an efficient and proper manner, they must not rely on the contingencies of the individual organism's singular lived history. If instincts had to take shape through the defiles of each organism's idiosyncratic set of experiences, then nature would be sending living beings out into a world in which they do not automatically "know" how to survive. But, large amounts of observational data contradict this possibility; most organisms seemingly enter the world with a minimum *savoir faire* aiding their struggle for survival. In Lacanian parlance, the notion of instinct entails the idea of a sort of preexistent, readymade "knowledge in the Real."[3]

Second, instincts are usually interpreted as serving the interests of the individual and/or the species to which this individual belongs. Automatic responses like "fight or flight" increase the chances that the indi-

vidual organism will live long enough to successfully reproduce. Other possible candidates for instinctual status, such as the need to eat and the preconditioned behaviors linked to this need, guarantee that the individual, regardless of its particular experiential history, gravitates toward those things necessary for its physical survival. No instinct is viewed as antagonistic to the vital interests of the living being of which it's a part. (Or, taking into consideration a caveat stemming from Richard Dawkins' famous notion of the "selfish gene,"[4] no genetically coded instinctual mechanism will go against the vital interests of the individual organism so long as that organism is capable of sexual reproduction in the service of the genes.)

Third, each instinct has a natural object or state of affairs that it strives to obtain. In the case of the need to eat, the behavior patterns working in the service of this need seek the appropriate nutritional materials as objects and, consequently, the sating of hunger as the resulting state of affairs. Similarly, the "fight or flight" reaction seeks physical self-preservation through an invariable, immediate reaction to a specific type of situation. These objects and/or states of affairs are not substitutable; they cannot be altered or replaced under the influence of ontogenetic factors.

Fourth and finally, instincts dictate a precise, limited range of actions to be executed in order to secure a set object/state as a natural goal. Behaviors typically labeled instinctual are actions that remain the same for all members of a given species. The common manner in which individuals of a particular species go about procuring food is biologically interpreted as an instinctual function answering to a physical need. Similarly, self-preservative instincts, when faced with an extremely dangerous situation, trigger an automatic response, a response functioning as a reflex mechanism in all members of the species.

And yet, isn't there a difference between the two examples of instinct employed above—that is, the satisfaction of the need to eat and the "fight or flight" reaction? On the one hand, hunger and the activities prompted thereby are recurrent instinctual factors arising from the physical constitution of the individual organism. Its internal metabolism demands the execution of the preprogrammed instinctual actions designed to meet this need. On the other hand, the "fight or flight" pattern is a reactive behavior, conditioned by contingent circumstances in the external world. Only when the environment happens to present immediate, direct threats is this reflex action activated. Nutritional instincts are linked to an internal source that recurs according to a regular metabolic rhythm. Self-preservative instincts, conditioned by the external environment, are linked mainly to the contingency of chance circumstances.

Nonetheless, whether recurrent or reactive, instincts are nonhistoricized to the extent that they are not modified in the individual by virtue of ontogenetic occurrences. The individual's life history, as well as the structures molding this history, exerts little to no influence on biologically innate mechanisms. The question of whether humans have any purely instinctual features existing in isolation from their "denaturalized" environment has been posed in a striking way by Freudian psychoanalysis. But, this question is far from the point of receiving an adequate answer. Like many fields today, psychoanalysis is too often caught between two extremes—biological materialism and social constructivism. For the time being, a decision regarding the real relevance of this opposition must be put in suspense. Insofar as drive is not instinct, analytic theory doesn't reside solely in the realm of biology. That much can be safely assumed.

In his seventh seminar, Lacan equates the essence of *Trieb* with "historicization," namely, the ontogenetic modification of libidinal forces. Unlike the natural invariance of instinct, the drive is an entity/function whose very constitution is intimately linked to both the phenomenal and structural organization of subjectivity:

> [T]he drive as such is something extremely complex for anyone who considers it conscientiously and tries to understand Freud's articulation of it. It isn't to be reduced to the complexity of the instinct as understood in the broadest sense . . . It embodies a historical dimension whose true significance needs to be appreciated by us. . . .
>
> Remembering, 'historicizing,' is coextensive with the functioning of the drive in what we call the human psyche. (*SVII,* 209)

Lacan's pronouncements of this sort have led many of his interpreters to unreservedly liquidate all somatic features from Freud's *Trieb*.[5] Lacanian theorists frequently speak of the human body as being completely overwritten by the signifiers of the symbolic order, of anatomy being sublated and digested by a nonbiological sphere.[6] If drive is historicized in this manner, completely sucked into the "order of the signifier" without remainder, then it's fundamentally a sociosymbolic construct. Allegedly, reference to the biological reality of the human body is not only no longer needed, but is perceived as undesirable. However, it merits noting that Lacan only says that drive should not be "reduced" to instinct—not that the characteristics of instinct are mutually exclusive with those of *Trieb*. Furthermore, the key difference between instinct and drive lies in the historicized aspect of drive. This stipulation doesn't rule out the existence of a nonhistoricized (hence, quasi-instinctual) aspect of drive, a partial aspect vital to the totality of drive structure.

In an oft-quoted passage from "Drives and Their Vicissitudes"—the frequency of its invocation is only matched by the frequency of its misinterpretation—Freud speaks of the drive as lying on "the frontier between the mental and the somatic." He states:

> If we now apply ourselves to considering mental life from a *biological* point of view, an 'instinct' appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body. (*SE* 14: 121–122)

The last phrase, no matter how sympathetic to social constructivism one wishes Freud to be, is impossible to ignore—"in consequence of its connection with the body." Although drives are different from instincts in many significant ways—lack of a natural object, potential for ongoing ontogenetic modification, and so on—there is no way, from a Freudian perspective, to utterly eliminate biological influences. Freud makes this quite explicit:

> In spite of all our efforts to prevent biological terminology and considerations from dominating psycho-analytic work, we cannot avoid using them even in our descriptions of the phenomena that we study. We cannot help regarding the term 'instinct' as a concept on the frontier between the spheres of psychology and biology. (*SE* 13: 182)

Freud suggests that if *Trieb* is situated on an aporetic frontier, this means that it involves both the biological and the nonbiological—the phenomenological, the sociocultural, the historical, and so on. Of course, psychoanalysis doesn't proclaim that the human subject is biologically overdetermined. On the contrary, the analytic theory of drives investigates the perpetual discord between the two frontiers delineated by Freud. Nonetheless, what must be kept in mind is that the intermediary status of drive does not license social constructivism's unimpeded co-optation of psychoanalysis.

In its general metapsychological form as a borderline concept, drive is best conceived as "tychic" (*à la* Lacan's transformation of *tuché* into an adjective). The Real, as, in part, the biological forces active at the bodily level, cannot be grasped in and of itself, in a state separate from the nonbiological tiers of the psyche. This bodily Real registers its (non)presence exclusively to the extent that it shapes the Imaginary (phenomenological) and Symbolic (structural) registers of human experience. The somatic

side of drive is thus a Lacanian "lost cause," something necessarily inferred as an originary catalyst or spur that nonetheless is inaccessible *an sich,* in brute, raw, unmediated form. Addressing the political implications of Lacanian theory, Yannis Stavrakakis contends that the elimination of the Real in relation to the Symbolic and the Imaginary results in a sterile solipsism:

> The crucial question that social constructionism is incapable of answering is the following: if the level of construction is engulfing the totality of the real, what stimulates the production of new social constructions? What stimulates the desire to articulate new constructions of reality? This cause has to be something external to the level of construction itself otherwise the argument enters into a tautological spiral . . . in order to de-essentialise the constructionist argument and reveal the logic that governs its production and articulation, without however reoccupying a traditional essentialist position, we have to locate an exteriority which serves as the cause of our social constructions, an exteriority which is in itself unrepresentable but constitutive of the play of representation. (Stavrakakis 1999, 67)

These comments can be readily transposed onto the present discussion. The late Freud posits a fundamental conflict between drives and civilization—society demands a degree of instinctual renunciation. Now, if drives themselves are nothing more than social constructions, then why is there this conflict? Why is sublimation necessary if drives are always–already part and parcel of the social machine? Additionally, wouldn't this indicate that the antagonism cited by Freud is merely a self-enclosed struggle of society against itself? The complete evacuation of the nonsocial Real—namely, in this context, the biophysiological—especially in the case of drives, leads to a rather far-fetched sociohistorical solipsism. A more plausible alternative is what Stavrakakis describes as "an exteriority which is in itself unrepresentable but constitutive of the play of representation." Along the lines of the relation between the Real cause qua *tuché* and the Imaginary–Symbolic effects of this cause, the Freudian *Trieb* is the pound of flesh caught up in a matrix of elements irreducible to this bodily cause. Despite being distinct from the purely physical level, *Trieb* is partially driven by a Real, unrepresentable, and, perhaps, biological "lost cause."

This position doesn't entail the erroneous assertion that analysts ever "handle the clay of instinct." Epistemologically speaking, the "material cause" of drive—the drive-source in isolation, libidinal energy in its unmediated purity—is never directly accessible to the analytic observer. Freud stipulates that the death drive cannot be encountered in a pure

state; the death drive only appears through its combinations with *Eros*.[7] Laplanche words it thus—"Freud . . . admits that drive energy is an 'x,' an unknown that transports us from equation to equation" (Laplanche 1980c, 204).[8] And, of course, the death drive is best understood as a characterization of the axis of iteration (source and pressure). Consequently, the energetic, quasi-somatic source—that is, the dimension of drive closest to the biophysiological realm—is a definitively unknowable variable that cannot be grasped except as part of an "equation" in which its causal role is eclipsed by its nonbiological effects. This equation is the multifaceted entirety of the differentiated, heterogeneous structure of *Trieb*. Although impossible to grasp in itself, a somatic "x" must be assumed for the structural equation of drive to function, to be set in motion—in short, to be driven.[9] Admitting this is not the same as claiming that psychoanalysis has privileged and direct insight into the biological condition of humanity. (Again, the analytic reference to the somatic can easily be accepted as nothing more than an essential regulative idea for the functioning of analytic reason as underpinned by its grounding metapsychological system.) However, these remarks are a necessary part of comprehending the radicality of psychoanalysis's apprehension of a borderline dimension between the biological and the nonbiological. Metapsychology offers a third path beyond the unproductive stalemate between reductionism and constructivism.

In a paper entitled "The Discovery of Dr. Freud," Louis Althusser claims that *Trieb* is a concept incapable of acquiring theoretical precision. Because of its borderline status, drive lacks "a satisfying definition":

> [T]he concept of *drive* . . . is quite an interesting concept, for Freud never managed to give a satisfying definition of it, which did not prevent the concept from 'functioning' quite suitably within metapsychological 'theory' and in practice. Why this impossibility in defining it? Not because of its imprecision but because of the impossibility of thinking its precision theoretically. This concept seeks its definition in an impossible difference with instinct, that is, with a biological reality. I say impossible since for Freud, the drive (*Trieb*) is profoundly bound to a biological reality, even though it is distinct from it. (Althusser 1996, 102–103)

In Althusser's view, the fact that the drive cannot entirely rid itself of reference to a biological level compromises its potential for theoretical exactitude. Of course, in Freud's defense, one could invoke his warning, from the opening paragraph of "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," that, "The advance of knowledge . . . does not tolerate any rigidity even in definitions" (*SE* 14: 117). The indeterminacy of the nature of drives is required

for the advancement of psychoanalytic work. (Freud deliberately avoids assigning an ontological status to *Trieb* as an entity, leaving it to be defined solely at the level of measurable economic action.)[10] Althusser acknowledges as much in saying that the drive has nonetheless functioned well within analytic theory.

If one insists on remaining caught in an either/or situation between the somatic and the psychical, then perhaps what Althusser perceives as the impossibility of endowing *Trieb* with further metapsychological exactitude is unsurpassable. This perspective treats the blurring of biological and nonbiological factors in drive as a theoretically undesirable indecision requiring rectification in favor of one side or the other. But, alternatively, if one sees the borderline nature of *Trieb* as a tantalizing theoretical glimpse of an exit from the antinomy of soma and psyche, then perhaps one can be content not to demand an unnecessary forced choice between biology and nonbiology. Althusser is right, even on Freud's own admission, that *Trieb* is a concept still in need of major theoretical refinements. But, these refinements can and should be effectuated through a model that has no need of prematurely deciding either that drive is ultimately a biological function or that drive is actually a sociolinguistic entity. Delineating the temporal structure of *Trieb* doesn't require such a decision, enabling the choice of the drives' ontological status to be delayed in order to reconsider the concept itself from other viewpoints besides those defined by the materialism–constructivism debates.

Returning to the four features of the biologistic conception of instinct outlined above, more precise differentiations can be drawn between instincts and drives on a point by point basis. First, in contrast to the genetic inherency of instinct, drive is not a natural heritage passed down through intraspecies reproduction; drives are not simply direct expressions of genes. The contours of an individual's libidinal economy are specific to that individual alone. Why is this the case? Although there are common somatic loci of the excitations operative in specific drives—the mouth in the oral drive, the reproductive organs in the genital drive, and so on—these bodily stimuli are always–already routed through what Freud identifies as the "mental" level of psychical life. How is this mental plane distinct, being the "other side" of the frontier adjoining the somatic realm of human existence? Ideational representations of aims and objects form the mental dimension of the drive.

But, don't instincts also have aims and objects? This is true. However, in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* Freud designates the notion of "object" as the lynchpin in distinguishing natural instincts from the psychoanalytic theory of *Trieb.* Throughout that text, Freud repeatedly stresses how drives lack a natural, pre-given object. As regards sexuality

(a field always vulnerable to being reduced to instinctual functions, given the centrality traditionally accorded to reproduction), Freud characterizes the everyday view of the "sexual instinct" as follows:

> The fact of the existence of sexual needs in human beings and animals is expressed in biology by the assumption of a 'sexual instinct' on the analogy of the instinct of nutrition, that is of hunger. Everyday language possesses no counterpart to the word 'hunger,' but science makes use of the word 'libido' for that purpose.
>
> Popular opinion has quite definite ideas about the nature and characteristics of this sexual instinct. It is generally understood to be absent in childhood, to set in at the time of puberty in connection with the process of coming to maturity and to be revealed in the manifestations of an irresistible attraction exercised by one sex upon the other; while its aim is presumed to be sexual union, or at all events actions leading in that direction. We have every reason to believe, however, that these views give a very false picture of the true situation. If we look into them more closely we shall find that they contain a number of errors, inaccuracies and hasty conclusions. (*SE* 7: 135)

More specifically, Freud asserts that the primary mistake behind the popular conception of sexuality is the presumption of an instinct inevitably inclined toward a natural, innate object-choice—heterosexual, genital copulation. Through the study of perversions and their origins in the polymorphous perversity of all infants, Freud concludes that the bond between the somatic side of the sexual drive and its objects of satisfaction—the nonsomatic, mental realm of ideational representations—is tenuous, contingent, and constructed. Laplanche and Pontalis summarize the consequences of this denaturalization of instincts via the concept of *Trieb:*

> Some writers seem to use '*Instinkt*' and '*Trieb*' interchangeably; others apparently draw an implicit distinction by keeping '*Instinkt*' as a designation (in zoology, for example) for behaviour predetermined by heredity and appearing in virtually identical form in all individual members of a single species.
>
> In Freud's work the two terms are used in quite distinct senses. The Freudian conception of *Trieb*—a pressure that is relatively indeterminate both as regards the behaviour it induces and as regards the satisfying object—differs quite clearly from theories of instinct, whether in their traditional form or in the revised version proposed by modern researchers (the concepts of behaviour patterns, innate trigger-

> mechanisms, specific stimuli-signals, etc.). (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 214)

If a genetically hardwired sexual instinct exists in all human beings, then why do some people develop in such a way that they have no interest in heterosexual, genital copulation? Why do some subjects choose objects with no apparent sexual value and/or no relation to reproduction as an aim? Instincts do not fail. As an innate part of an individual organism's biological constitution, they always operate to invariably produce an outcome dictated by nature. And yet, psychoanalysis uncovers numerous instances in the realm of human sexuality where mature adults well suited for reproduction show no desire to satisfy their sexual urges through behaviors prescribed by "nature." According to Freud, this leaves only one conclusion: There is no innate instinctual object corresponding to the libidinal economy of the sexual drives. Objects of the sexual drives are acquired through nonbiological (experiential, social, and so on) processes, the most notable mediator of object-choice being the structure of the Oedipal family unit. Similarly, Freud insists that all aims of the drives are derived from the early experiences of the subject, that is, aims are products of ontogenesis.[11]

Referring to the three other facets of instinct—namely, self-preservative purpose, invariability of goal, and automaticity of function—one can immediately comprehend why Freud views the severing of instinct from a correspondingly natural object-choice as the crux of the difference between *Trieb* and *Instinkt*. As regards evolutionary factors, a sexual drive bereft of a heterosexual, genital orientation is useless for species preservation. Furthermore, both the fixity of a goal as well as the preconditioned patterning of behavior dissipate with the loosening of the bond between instinct and object. The natural goal of heterosexual reproduction is no longer a necessity dictating an invariant type of sexual activity, but a contingent aim dependent upon the caprices of an idiosyncratic template governing individual object-choices.

In addition, the 1920 introduction of the death drive, and its subsequent metapsychological generalization for all drives, widens the gap between instinct and drive. The demonic, deathly side of *Trieb* (the axis of iteration) demands satisfactions often at odds with the physical, psychological, and/or social well being of the individual. The simplest example of this would be an oral drive once fixated upon a subliminatory activity such as smoking. According to classical analytic wisdom, cigarettes provide a relatively acceptable substitute for the lost, prohibited satisfaction derived from the tactile sensations connected with breast-feeding. But, as

the medical establishment never tires of reiterating, smoking is harmful to one's health. Heedless of the physical risks posed to the human being as a biological organism, the oral fixation invested in the activity of smoking relentlessly demands the gratification that comes to be derived from this form of consumption. If instincts are essentially self-preservative, then drives are not only "beyond the pleasure principle," but are also beyond what could be called "biological rationality." Drives often behave as parasites, feeding off the vitality of their biological host in their insatiable quest for enjoyment. (This motif is echoed by Lacan's myth of the "lamella"—of *jouissance* as a vampiric monster draining the life of its victim [see Appendix B, §4].)[12]

Other examples readily illustrate this "irrational" side of the Freudian drive. For instance, even in individuals whose sexual drives are oriented around heterosexual, genital intercourse, specific preconditions shape the selection of partners. Almost any partner of the opposite sex could potentially function as the natural object for a reproductive instinct. However, humans rarely, if ever, have such a minimal, broad criterion dictating with whom they'll sleep. Various traits, which are quite superfluous in relation to a reproductive instinct, determine sexual object-choice. Something as trivial as eye or hair color (or the sorts of clothes worn) can make all the difference between aroused attraction and frigid indifference. If there is anything instinctual about human sexuality, it appears to take a back seat to the finicky whims of psychical drive.[13]

Not only is it possible to contrast instinct and drive in the fashions elaborated above, but another general feature widens the gap between these two concepts—temporal structure. As noted, instincts are either recurrent (as in the nutritional instincts) or reactive (as in "fight or flight"). Temporally speaking, the former is repetitive and cyclical, while the latter is sporadic, given its conditioned status as regards contingent events. However, whether as recurrent or reactive, instincts—to the extent that they form the genetic heritage of a species—are nonhistoricized functions. Evolution may alter them on the grand scale of phylogenetic time, but there is scant possibility of an ontogenetic modification of instincts. By contrast, it is questionable whether there actually is a phylogenetic transmission of drive structure. (Freud flirts with this idea off and on, but never commits to it with absolute certainty.)[14] However, as is clear from the *Three Essays* onward, ontogenesis is everything in terms of forming drives, insofar as drives, by definition, don't exist as source alone, but also require ontogenetically acquired objects. In other words, while instincts are nonhistoricized, drives are intimately historicized forces.

Additionally, a whole analysis of drives could be developed around the theme of "the right time." Instincts always trigger their resulting, con-

ditioned behavior patterns at the appropriate moment. The activities necessary for procuring food arise when the organism is hungry. The reflex actions employed in physical conflict are mobilized in the face of immediate danger. Drives, especially once repressed, tend to be activated at the worst possible times. The neurotic ego is besieged by the intensity of the drives exactly in those situations that, as disturbing situations due to their association with an aim-inhibited drive, arouse the greatest amount of unpleasure for the conscious individual. What's more, typical sexual problems in the neuroses exhibit this disjunction between drive and "the right time"—the hysteric's disgust with copulation and the genital organs, the obsessional neurotic's impotence at the very moment when intercourse is about to occur, and so on. Although a sexual instinct would, in cases such as these, automatically prepare the individual to engage in the sexual act, the sexual drives are easily divorced not only from the "proper object," but also from the appropriate moment.

Before proceeding further, a few cautionary remarks are in order. First, although instincts and drives are contrasted according to the absence or presence of ontogenetic historicization, respectively, this is not to say that *Trieb* is historical through and through. The axis of iteration (source and pressure) bears a resemblance to the recurrent, nonhistoricized version of instinct. Despite this similarity, drives do not thereby take on traits such as a self-preservative purpose, a movement oriented around a natural goal, or invariant behavioral features. The axis of alteration (aim and object), once placed in conflict with the axis of iteration, guarantees the derailing of instinct by virtue of the loss of a biological, teleological trajectory. Nonetheless, instinct's illustration of an unmasterable "return of the bodily Real" is a trait that should not be eliminated from an account of the psychoanalytic drive. *Trieb* is the conceptual, metapsychological embodiment of an unsuccessful mediation between a nonhistoricized, quasi-somatic source (with pressure as its affective avatar, voicing the drive's "demand for work" through unpleasure and anxiety) and a temporalized realm of both objectival representations and historically alterable aims.

Additionally, reemphasizing the somatic components of *Trieb* in light of the constructivist appropriation of Freudian theory doesn't necessitate surrendering the earlier transcendentalist reading of metapsychology. As a border on the frontier between two apparently heterogeneous orders, *Trieb* is a "neither/nor" concept, namely, neither ultimately somatic nor thoroughly mental (noting that Freud's use of "mental" connotes a range of levels—phenomenological, structural, sociocultural, and so on). Furthermore, by interpreting the relationship between these two heterogeneous orders of the drive along the lines of Lacan's Real *tuché* (the quasi-somatic axis of iteration) as distinguished from the Imaginary–Symbolic

*automaton* (the mental/psychical axis of alteration), the psychoanalytic compromise between biologism and constructivism might very well be related to the genetic transcendentalism continually sought after by Lacan. The task of a metapsychological theory of *Trieb* would now be to map the structural trajectory governing the interaction between "soma" (Real) and "psyche" (Imaginary and Symbolic). And, this task is best initiated by delineating the temporal organization(s) shaping the constitution of *Trieb*.

What's more, Freud's 1905 assertions about the absence of connection between the "sexual instinct" and its respective object requires qualification. As known, the 1915 drive model stipulates that any drive is a four-tiered montage. (The notion of *Trieb* as a composite entity is formulated by Freud in 1905,[15] but the 1915 schema lends a greater degree of precision to this notion.) The category of "object" is included among the four components of drive structure. So, do drives have objects or don't they? Only with the benefit of hindsight accrued from an understanding of the later Freud's work can the polemical claims of the *Three Essays* be properly interpreted. Freud intends to refute the existence of innate, natural objects corresponding to biological instincts. This does not exclude the drive from having a contingent object. In fact, by definition, a drive includes a drive-object. Freud's point is that drives necessarily arise from the cathexes congealing out of the historical, ontogenetic experience of the subject. The object that the drive is never without is a contingent prop, a variable position filled out by particular elements. However, every drive intrinsically contains this variable position inevitably occupied by a variety of things. (In the parlance of Brentano and Husserl, drives are "intentional"—always relating to an object, even if this object is an ill-defined or variable "x.") The empty place of contingency known as the drive-object is an internal (or, extimate) dimension of the metapsychological function of *Trieb*—"The idea of a contingency would indicate therefore that the object is not organically or biologically determined by the drive, but this doesn't imply that it isn't fixed by history and that it doesn't become, on the contrary, extremely specified" (Laplanche 1980c, 24).

Laplanche offers his own description of the Freudian frontier between the somatic and the mental. He speaks of drive as a "body in the psyche," perhaps similar to the Lacanian *objet petit a* as a "foreign body" embedded within the unconscious—"the drive as an intermediary term between the physical and the psychical; or again, as a representative of biological forces, of the body in the psychical" (Laplanche 1980c, 212). And yet, as conceptually appealing as this metaphor might be, it leaves too many questions unanswered. Is this "body" an actual, material thing, or a

mythical construct endemic to psychoanalytic thought? How does the drive "embody" itself in the psyche? Can the historicized dimension of drive shape and alter its quasi-somatic dimension, or is this posited somatic fundament to be viewed as entirely determinative of subsequent libidinal functioning (*à la* Freud's infamous "*Die Anatomie ist das Schicksal*")? How does the borderline status of drive affect debates centered on such themes as social constructivism, the essence of subjectivity, and the role of the body? These questions demand further labor, a labor engaged in by the remainder of this project. In a 1924 footnote added to the *Three Essays* (this text marking the official inauguration of the psychoanalytic theory of drive), Freud implicitly calls for additional theoretical work—"The theory of the instincts is the most important but at the same time the least complete portion of psycho-analytic theory" (*SE* 7: 168).

## §19 The Three Phases of Freud's Drive Theory

Freud's most radical reversals of thought hinge upon the theory of the drives. And, each revision of his drive theory involves subtle but evident modifications of the temporal orientation of the drives. Three distinct phases of the drive theory are reflected in three Freudian texts—the 1905 *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* the 1915 "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," and the 1920 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* The two chronological extremes—the 1905 and 1920 theories—will be handled first, with the 1915 elaboration of *Trieb* being addressed later (see §§24–25).

Freud's 1905 drive model is clearly developmental. Although the *Three Essays* strive to dislodge prejudices about the natural centrality of heterosexual, genital sexuality, Freud nonetheless speaks of a series of libidinal stages culminating in a "genital phase." Oddly enough, in one and the same text, Freud both challenges the instinctual inherency of heterosexual object-choices while, at the same time, dissecting human sexual life according to a normative, developmental telos:

> The final outcome of sexual development lies in what is known as the normal sexual life of the adult, in which the pursuit of pleasure comes under the sway of the reproductive function and in which the component instincts, under the primacy of a single erotogenic zone, form a firm organization directed towards a sexual aim attached to some extraneous sexual object. (*SE* 7: 197)

Freud seeks a compromise position between the everyday presumption of a biological sexual instinct and the potentially absolute, unreserved denaturalization of sexuality by the speculations of psychoanalysis: Normal sexuality is a contingent result of a limited range of ontogenetic factors. And yet, although this "final outcome of sexual development" is contingent, Freud still insists on retaining it as the measuring rod against which "deviance" is defined. In the *Three Essays,* the relative severity of a perversion is judged according to its distance from "the normal sexual life of the adult."

Freud's developmental schema is well known. In the oral phase, the child initially focuses on such pleasures as the sensations of sucking and the satisfaction of ingesting nourishment. Freud deems this phase "autoerotic," since the child primarily cathects its own body (and the organic needs emanating from this body) as the locus of pleasurable sensations—"At its origin it attaches itself to one of the vital somatic functions; it has as yet no sexual object, and is thus auto-erotic" (*SE* 7: 182). The second Freudian stage of libidinal development is the anal phase. The progressive mastery of the body's muscular apparatus—although toilet training is the usual example associated with this stage, Freud groups all cathexes of muscle control under the anal phase—provides a new focal point for libidinal investments.[16] Freud places both the oral and anal phases under the heading "pregenital" (the "pre-" already alerts one to the teleological–developmental slant of this early Freudian framework), that is, neither oral nor anal eroticism initially takes a heterosexual object with a genital orientation as an aim.

Freud maintains that, in the usual course of events, the genital phase (surfacing after a prolonged period of childhood latency, during which time the sexual drives lie relatively dormant until puberty) comes to replace the dominantly autoerotic organizations of infantile sexuality. However, Freud is careful not to claim that orality and/or anality simply disappear with the arrival of adult sexuality. (In Freudian psychoanalysis, subsequent developmental stages never completely eclipse preceding ones.) He insists that these earlier "component drives" participate in the eroticism surrounding heterosexual intercourse. The role of body parts other than the genitals in the foreplay leading up to copulation is cited by Freud as evidence for the persistence of infantile sexuality in the normal adult picture.[17] For Freud, if foreplay becomes a sexual end-in-itself, then genital sexuality regresses to an infantile state—namely, a fixation on oral and anal variations of eroticism.[18] The genital phase doesn't mark the absolute eclipse of prior stages of sexual development, but instead inaugurates the unification of the component drives under the interests of sexual reproduction—a "natural" aim accidentally reached along the "un-

natural" path of *Trieb.*[19] Hence, Freud states that, "the sexual instinct . . . is put together from various sources" (*SE* 7: 173).

In the *Three Essays,* a tension appears between Freud's determinist stance (as already espoused five years earlier in *The Interpretation of Dreams,* apropos the indestructibility of infantile wishes) and his developmental account of the drives. Although Freud does not assert that the genital phase completely abolishes the prior arrangement of infantile sexuality qua component drives, he does posit that this final phase usurps the hegemony of previous libidinal complexes. Does this change of rule from an oral and/or anal autoeroticism to a genital drive rearrange unconscious structures? How is this demotion of infantile sexuality, with its indestructible desires, possible in an unconscious supposedly unaffected by the passage of time? The *après-coup* logic of the screen memory returns in the developmental teleology of the *Three Essays:* Infantile sexuality participates in driving the individual toward genital sexuality, while, in a retroactive fashion, this thus generated genital sexuality modifies the unconscious organizational hierarchy of the component drives.

Consequently, the sexual unconscious (at least as of 1905) is far from being timeless. In actuality, it appears dominated by a forward-looking, anticipatory trajectory. However, this teleological movement runs along a two-way street—regression is an omnipresent possibility in human subjects. If an individual regresses or becomes perverse, she/he may easily forsake heterosexual intercourse in favor of other aims and objects. For Freud, infantile sexuality usually provides the reservoir of alternative aims and objects. Hence, the neurotic abandonment of genital sexuality represents a regression in comparison with the normal telos of adult sexual life. Within this perspective, the sole, invariant constant is the undifferentiated libido itself, the pure force of quasi-somatic sources demanding pleasurable gratifications.

In several places, Freud compares the libido to a stream of fluid running through a series of interconnected pipes. This image makes reference to the economic/hydraulic model of drives, in which forces accumulate and are discharged in conjunction with certain structural arrangements. The pipes are the structures (aims and objects) channeling the economic, energetic dimension of the drives (source and pressure)—"The various channels along which the libido passes are related to each other from the very first like inter-communicating pipes" (*SE* 7: 151). Freud's metaphor illustrates repression and the subliminatory mechanisms resulting therefrom. Repression works like a dam blocking the libido's flow through a particular pipe. Instead of simply coming to a halt before this blockage, the libidinal stream seeks a detour (a sublimation) through the available pathways connected to its initial course of move-

ment. Freud refers to sublimation (including faulty sublimations qua symptoms) as a matter of "collateral flow":

> [T]he libido behaves like a stream whose main bed has become blocked. It proceeds to fill up collateral channels which may hitherto have been empty. Thus, in the same way, what appears to be the strong tendency (though, it is true, a negative one) of psychoneurotics to perversion may be collaterally determined, and must, in any case, be collaterally intensified. The fact is that we must put sexual repression as an internal factor alongside such external factors as limitation of freedom, inaccessibility of a normal sexual object, the dangers of the normal sexual act, etc., which bring about perversions in persons who might perhaps otherwise have remained normal. (*SE* 7: 170)

Implicit here is the notion that libido, as the energetic force underlying sexual drives,[20] is a lowest common denominator in two senses: One, all human beings, whether "normal" or "pathological," are subjected to the workings of a libidinal economy; two, all variations of the sexual drives and their psychical manifestations within each subject are permutations of this basic libidinal force. Consequently, if Freud wishes to maintain his 1905 theory of sexuality alongside the 1900 assertion of the indestructibility of infantile desires, then a clarification of his theory is necessary: The developmental perspective on sexual drives pertains exclusively to the aims and objects of the drives, while the timeless, nondevelopmental libido is restricted to being nothing more than the quasi-somatic "x" of the drive-source. The representatives of sexual drives are amenable to temporal analysis (whether developmental and/or regressive). However, the economic aspect of *Trieb* is, as Freud says, a constant force, regularly repeating its demand for discharge. This demand pays no heed to the passage of time or the change of circumstances. The genesis of genital sexuality does nothing to alter the recurrent rhythm underlying the component drives. At best, the genitalization of *Trieb* merely harnesses the brute economic force of the axis of iteration through a series of displacements.

The extensive changes wrought by *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* include, among other matters, a shift in the temporal orientation of *Trieb.* In the *Three Essays,* an anticipatory, teleological model predominates. During puberty, as a specified period of physical maturation in the human organism, the rule of an infantile libidinal economy is displaced by the advent of "normal adult sexuality" (assuming that no serious ontogenetic factors interfere with this sequence of events). In 1905, Freud's determinist stance seems reserved exclusively for pathological subjects: In those who fail to reach the genital phase, past childhood experiences hinder li-

bidinal development. But, in nonpathological subjects, the absence of interfering factors allows nature to run its course. By 1920, Freud abandons this developmental emphasis.

In elaborating the numerous consequences of his shift from the first to the second topography, Freud permits himself to extrapolate from the *Todestrieb* to *Trieb* in general. Defined through recourse to biological metaphors, the death drive is a drive inherent in living organisms to seek a return to inorganicity—namely, to a state of absolute rest. The organism's constant struggle to eliminate tension—for example, to discharge the pressure accumulating when a drive-source's demands go unmet—indicates its basic orientation around a zero-level of stimulation. As a characterization of all drives, the death drive describes what has been called here the axis of iteration. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* the focus on repetition applies the assertions regarding the timelessness of the unconscious to the realm of *Trieb.* The axis of iteration is ignorant of chronological and/or retroactive temporality, being nothing more than a cyclical, periodic iteration of an uncompromising "demand for work."

In the second topography, Freud speaks of all drives as "essentially conservative." In other words, various drives share the common attribute of struggling "to restore an earlier state of things." In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud writes:

> But how is the predicate of being 'instinctual' related to the compulsion to repeat? At this point we cannot escape a suspicion that we may have come upon the track of a universal attribute of instincts and perhaps of organic life in general which has not hitherto been clearly recognized or at least not explicitly stressed. *It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things* which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life. (*SE* 18: 36)

Juxtaposing this thesis with the 1905 developmental model, one is left with a troubling question: If each and every drive aims at early experiences and operates under the sway of a conservative inertia, then how can the later genital phase succeed in displacing the earlier autoerotic drives? In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1938), Freud reiterates that drives are inherently conservative:

> The forces which we assume to exist behind the tensions caused by the needs of the id are called *instincts.* They represent the somatic demands upon the mind. Though they are the ultimate cause of all activity, they

> are of a conservative nature; the state, whatever it may be, which an organism has reached gives rise to a tendency to re-establish that state so soon as it has been abandoned. It is thus possible to distinguish an indeterminate number of instincts, and in common practice this is in fact done. For us, however, the important question arises whether it may not be possible to trace all these numerous instincts back to a few basic ones. We have found that instincts can change their aim (by displacement) and also that they can replace one another—the energy of one instinct passing over to another. This latter process is still insufficiently understood. (*SE* 23: 148)

In the *Three Essays,* the mutations of the drives in terms of aims and objects (the different libidinal "phases") are described in extensive detail. Subsequently, in 1938, the transformations of drive structure remain "insufficiently understood." Why? In the early version of his drive theory, Freud focuses a great deal on *Trieb* insofar as it is defined in large part by its cathetic investments in extraneous objects—the axis of alteration is the primary focus. In his later work, Freud attempts to pan back and gain a panoramic overview of the multitude of specific drives in terms of two universal classes. Given that different drives do not share the same aims and objects, Freud's later desire to treat *Trieb* in a very broad and basic manner necessitates an emphasis on the lowest common denominator of drives, namely, the energetic, quasi-somatic "x" of drive-source—the axis of iteration comes to the fore in the second topography. The problem is that Freud doesn't explicitly synthesize the teleological–developmental model of 1905 with the post-1920 regressive nature of *Trieb.*

Furthermore, in his discussion of drives throughout the period of the second topography, Freud frequently equivocates between repetition and regression. The insistent iterability of the death drive dovetails nicely with the timeless nature of the unconscious; the repetitive resurgence of libidinal forces buttresses the claim that the unconscious refuses to acknowledge chronological time. However, this isn't precisely what Freud says regarding the manner in which the death drive is emblematic of the general form of *Trieb.*

As already demonstrated, the dream-work necessitates an implicit capacity on the part of the unconscious to recognize a distinction between earlier and later mnemic traces. The preservation of a determinist stance in dream interpretation—that is, the assumption that the day-residues participating in the manifest dream text are thoroughly overdetermined by the earliest repressed aspects of infantile libidinal life—requires that the unconscious possesses, at a minimum, an understanding of the skeletal paradigm of chronology as the difference between the earlier and the

later. The unconscious, at least insofar as it consists of varyingly cathected representations, cannot be altogether ignorant of time. Similarly, the drives are not utterly timeless. Their "conservative nature" indicates a regressive orientation, not an atemporal cyclicality; they seek "an earliest state of affairs," a fixed point in past time. In terms of the temporal characterization of *Trieb,* Freud's final drive theory is thus diametrically opposed to its 1905 presentation: The anticipatory teleology of the sexual drives gives way to the nostalgic, backward-looking orientation of the universalized *Todestrieb.* In neither case are drives strictly timeless—the inherent, ineliminable involvement of ideational representations in drive structure guarantees the temporalization of *Trieb* at the level of the axis of alteration. Nonetheless, Freud has trouble deciding how to weight the balance between development and regression, malleability and inertia.

The 1915 metapsychological schema of *Trieb* lies between the two extreme phases of Freud's drive theory. "Drives and Their Vicissitudes" is a vanishing mediator wedged between the modifiable drive of the *Three Essays* and the conservative drive of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* The treatment of drive as a compound organization combining both substitutable (temporal) and permanent (atemporal) components alleviates the tensions arising within Freud's oeuvre apropos these issues. Without this alleviation, one is confronted with an undesirable either/or choice regarding the theory of the drives: Either drives are extremely malleable by virtue of the contingency of their rapport with shifting aims and objects (this entails that there are as many drives as there are objects), or drives inexorably seek, along a regressive path, one thing only (that is, the absolute zero of the state of inorganicity, which defines all drives according to a single criterion). The metapsychology of *Trieb* encourages juxtaposing these two dimensions of drive—both its developmental and conservative sides—within the drive's own inner structuration. In other words, what is seemingly an unreconciled inconsistency in Freud's theoretical articulations concerning the drives is, in actuality, indicative of an inconsistency internal to the actual essence of *Trieb* itself.

## §20 Reassessing the Death Drive

One of the shortcomings of Freud's later drive theory is his failure to explicitly connect the death drive with the 1915 definition of drive. Multiple difficulties and ambiguities could have been avoided if Freud had been clear about this connection. If the death drive is a specific drive—or drive type—unto itself, then what are its source, pressure, aim(s), and ob-

ject(s)? If the death drive is characteristic of drives in general, then what part(s) of *Trieb* does it designate and describe? A generous interpretation annexes the death drive to the axis of iteration. A less charitable reading would latch onto those moments when Freud, carried away by his biological metanarrative, speaks as though death were a "state" sought by a particular group of drives—death as a noun, a thing or entity, capable of serving as an aim and/or object of the drive. This latter possibility generates numerous untenable contradictions within Freud's body of thought (as well as being highly questionable even when considered outside of the psychoanalytic milieu), and therefore, through a sort of process of elimination, justifies the former interpretation of the later theory. Additionally, Freud's cautions that the death drive is impossible to isolate from the alloys it forms in conjunction with other drives favors the first possibility.[21]

But, one might reply, what if the post-1920 theory represents a modification and/or rejection of the 1915 definition of *Trieb*? What if the "discovery" of the death drive challenges Freud's prior delineations of drive? Not only did Freud never directly repudiate his preceding metapsychological definition during the second topography—he even invokes it again in 1923. In an encyclopedia article entitled "The Libido Theory," Freud states:

> Each component instinct is unalterably characterized by its *source,* that is, by the region or zone of the body from which its excitation is derived. Each has furthermore as distinguishable features an *object* and an *aim.* The aim is always discharge accompanied by satisfaction, but it is capable of being changed from activity to passivity. The object is less closely attached to the instinct than was at first supposed . . . (*SE* 18: 256)

Although he doesn't directly mention drive-pressure, the terminology from "Drives and Their Vicissitudes" is clearly present. Hence, the death drive, in order to be coherently conceived, demands being squared with the overarching framework of Freudian metapsychology—a task which Freud himself does not carry out. Laplanche lists a series of dubious equivocations in analytic theory, all occurring under the rubric of the death drive: The death drive problematically designates, all at once, the desire for death, the tendency toward energetic constancy (the Nirvana principle), destructive impulses and behavior, as well as masochism.[22] Laplanche rightly accuses the *Todestrieb* of being a vague notion that has regrettably licensed analytic theory to gloss over a range of topics in a fashion entirely lacking in rigor—"The 'death drive' offers, nowadays, a screen of immunity to whoever wishes to develop in psychoanalysis any 'romantic,' 'pessimist' and eventually Heideggerian conceptions"

(Laplanche 1999e, 213).[23] This project wagers that returning to the metapsychological model of *Trieb* permits a certain restoration of rigor.

In the concluding paragraph of "The Libido Theory," Freud equates the conservative nature of drives with an organic tendency. Although he retains the vocabulary of 1915, he abandons the indeterminacy of *Trieb* in favor of a decisive biologization of the drives.[24] What used to vacillate on the border between soma and psyche now operates entirely under the exigencies of the somatic. Freud cannot imagine that the insistent, compulsive repetition of the drives is due to anything other than human biological constitution:

> *The Nature of the Instincts.*—This view would enable us to characterize instincts as tendencies inherent in living substance towards restoring an earlier state of things: that is to say, they would be historically determined and of a conservative nature and, as it were, the expression of an inertia or elasticity present in what is organic. Both classes of instincts, Eros as well as the death instinct, would, on this view, have been in operation and working against each other from the first origin of life. (*SE* 18: 259)

What does Freud mean here by "historically determined"? Is this a phylogenetic determination, in which the drives of the individual are shaped by humanity's history as a species? Or, is this an ontogenetic determination, in which the individual's own lived history shapes his/her libidinal economy? Unfortunately, the former possibility is the more likely of the two, given the rest of the claims presented.

In the *Three Essays,* despite the stress placed on a genital–reproductive norm in constructing a nosography of sexual disorders, Freud preserves a significant role for ontogenetic, historicizing factors in the evolution of the drives. The subject's lived experiences decisively impact unconscious organizations linked to the drives. Although biology does play a prominent part in the 1905 theory, the contingency of aims and objects insures a denaturalization of sexual life and critiques the idea that human fate is a law written in a purely organic language. (As Toril Moi aptly explains, even when Freud goes so far as to declare that "anatomy is destiny [*Schicksal*]," the term *Schicksal* preserves the notion that organic causes can give rise to a diverse plurality of nonorganic effects—effects which, unlike natural consequences, cannot be predicted vis-à-vis some sort of strictly scientific algorithm of causality.)[25] After the introduction of the death drive, ontogenesis gives way to the motionless fixity of a renaturalized *Trieb.* Human drives obey the same biological master as animal instincts. All life, from single-celled organisms to the most complex of

creatures, exists under the reign of this invariant desire to restore an absolute absence of tension. Instead of being ontogenetically determined, the earliest state of affairs sought by every drive is a common point of cathexis shared by every living thing—namely, death itself, as the "inorganic state." (It is no surprise that Frank Sulloway's reading of Freud as a "biologist of the mind" highlights this universality of death as an instinctual aim.)[26] Since death never falls within the limited sphere of the individual's experience—and cannot be experienced by definition—the drives are simultaneously produced by the biological architecture of the body and always–already predetermined in terms of their ultimate goal. Freud's overly zealous embracing of biological metaphors results in the loss of the historicized traits of *Trieb.* (Laplanche accurately observes that this later biologization of the drive theory entails losing the earlier plasticity of the representational dimension of *Trieb.*)[27] This renaturalization of drives, especially when Freud reifies the axis of alteration in terms of organically dictated points of cathexis, causes psychoanalysis to revert into being a dubious pseudobiological theory of instincts.[28]

In the 1915 paper "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," Freud excludes a knowledge or apprehension of death from the unconscious. He even declares that drives pay no heed whatsoever to the subject's mortality. Why is Freud justified in asserting this ignorance of the unconscious? The unconscious consists of repressed drive representatives. Moreover, no drive can be apprehended except insofar as it attaches itself to a representative[29] (which is the primary reason why Freud qualifies the *Todestrieb* as unknowable in itself):

> An instinct can never become an object of consciousness—only the idea that represents the instinct can. Even in the unconscious, moreover, an instinct cannot be represented otherwise than by an idea. If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it. When we nevertheless speak of an unconscious instinctual impulse or of a repressed instinctual impulse, the looseness of the phraseology is a harmless one. We can only mean an instinctual impulse the ideational representative of which is unconscious, for nothing else comes into consideration. (*SE* 14: 177)

Since death is neither an object/state of experience nor something readily given to phenomenal representation,[30] there cannot be a death drive in the sense of a distinct drive with its own aims and objects. No drive can be oriented around (repressed) mnemic traces of death per se, since no such traces exist. As the complete absence of experience, death cannot serve as an aim and/or object for an ontogenetically determined drive. According

to Freud's metapsychological axioms of the first topography, which posit multiple drives molded at the ontogenetic level as well as an unconscious incapable of directly comprehending anything other than concrete representatives subjected to repression, a death drive as a distinct drive unto itself is a contradiction in terms.

What's more, in "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," the primacy of a phenomenal ontogenesis in creating and defining the unconscious is readily apparent. Freud contends that the unconscious is ignorant of mortality by virtue of the impossibility of an individual experiencing his/her own death. Death can only be imagined for others, not for the first-person self:

> It is indeed impossible to imagine our own death; and whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that we are in fact still present as spectators. Hence the psycho-analytic school could venture on the assertion that at bottom no one believes in his own death, or, to put the same thing another way, that in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his own immortality. (*SE* 14: 289)

In the *Anthropology,* Kant already makes this same point—"Nobody can experience his own death (since it requires life in order to experience); he can only observe it in others . . . The thought, I am not, cannot exist at all; because if I am not, then it cannot occur to me that I am not" (Kant 1978, 55–56). Additionally, is it mere coincidence that the early Heidegger (a phenomenologist) also makes the same observations as Freud about the subject's relation to his/her own death? In *Being and Time,* Heidegger asserts that *Dasein* relates to its own mortal finitude in a "Being-toward-death" (*Sein zum Tode*). In other words, finite *Dasein,* due to its constitutive inability to transcend its immersion in the phenomenal field of its own experience (more precisely, its inability to phenomenally "endure" its own death), assumes instead certain existential positions in an anticipation of a death that is "always yet-to-come." Furthermore, Heidegger contends that the death of others does not convey an understanding of death to *Dasein; Dasein* is merely "there alongside," excluded from a (non)event whose essential trait is an irreplaceable "mineness."[31] Heidegger's assertions strengthen Freud's position: Neither the subject's own experience, nor its observation of others, provides it with material sufficient for an unconscious knowledge of death as an experiential state to which the source and pressure of a drive could become attached.[32] Again, to fix the essence of all drives on the basis of an invariant point of regressive orientation beyond the scope of individual, ontogenetic experience is to utterly destroy the uniqueness of *Trieb* as a psychoanalytic concept.

Arguably, Freud's key mistake in his later drive theory is the equivocation between repetition and regression. Repetition is not the same thing as regression, despite the fact that Freud perceives the former characteristic of drive as licensing its essentialization in terms of the latter. Put differently, Freud slides from repetition compulsion to the conservative nature of drive. Once more, a Kantian critical gesture is of assistance. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is informed and motivated by a series of prior observations regarding manifestations of an overriding tendency in individuals to repeat certain phenomena: Traumatized neurotics repeat the recollection of the trauma resulting in their illness; children, in struggling to gain a sense of mastery over a threatening and troubling world, tirelessly repeat simplistic games; the transference repeats past intersubjective relationships in the context of a seemingly unrelated present; the dreams of the adult repeat infantile wishes; the melancholic mourning the loss of a loved one unconsciously refuses to relinquish the bond, repetitiously reinstantiating the features of the lost object by preserving them as features of his/her own ego.[33] Departing from the problem of the pleasure principle in neurosis, Freud draws conclusions affecting the very foundations of psychoanalysis. But, how does he get from these instances of repetition to the notion of the regressive, conservative nature of *Trieb*?

Before answering this query, a much more basic question deserves to be posed: What is repetition in psychoanalysis? For Freud, a repeated thing is something that occurred earlier. What is repeated is what has already happened in the past, at least once before. Thus, each instance of an action or pattern dubbed repetitive necessitates assuming a prior action or pattern—or, for that matter, a fantasy—that gets repeated. In this way, a linear chain of iterations is reconstructed by the work of analytic interpretation. Freud's initial version of the drive theory posits that the origin of these concatenations of repeated phenomena uncovered in analysis lies in infantile experience. Drives are shaped by early ontogenetic factors. Although inaccessible to consciousness by virtue of repression, these factors are elements of the individual's lived history. However, under the sway of his pseudobiological speculations, the later Freud permits himself to extend the inferred causal origins of repetition even further back than infantile experience. He links *Trieb* to an inorganic state preceding life.[34] In other words, he asserts a causal origin of repetition that is literally beyond the limits of possible experience—the limits of analytic epistemology as well as the limits of the individual's own ontogenetic history.

The error in Freud's logic is to assume that the fact of repetition requires extending the inferred chain of past causes all the way back to an absolute, preexperiential origin (more specifically, a preorganic state). The analytic evidence Freud departs from in his revised drive theory

merely supports proposing that past experiences are repeated, not that a nonexperiential past is the ultimate referent of all drive activity: "Absent from every unconscious, death is perhaps rediscovered in the unconscious as the most radical—but also most sterile—principle of its logic. But it is life which crystallizes the first objects to which desire attaches itself, before even thought can cling to them" (Laplanche 1976, 126). Elsewhere, Laplanche complements this observation by noting that "life and death in psychoanalysis" cannot refer to either term in the literal, biological sense—"'Life and death in psychoanalysis' and 'life and death drives' do not refer to the life and death of a biological individual" (Laplanche 1989, 145). If hypostatized through the language of biology, the death drive becomes an untenable notion, flying in the face of both common sense as well as analytic metapsychology.

At best, *Todestrieb* is an adjective describing certain features of each and every drive. Defining it as a separate drive or class of drives—this would be to transform it from a description of *Trieb* into a noun-like entity unto itself—requires positing a distinct category of aim and/or object for this drive. Source and pressure alone do not distinguish drives from each other, since they all share what Freud calls a "neutral, displaceable energy." If the death drive is to stand alone as a separate drive, and not simply as an overall tendency of drives, then Freud is forced to reify the biological metaphor of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by speaking of an inorganic state as a point of cathexis for the energy of the death drive—"On the basis of theoretical considerations, supported by biology, we put forward the hypothesis of a death instinct, the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state" (*SE* 19: 40).

The noun form of the death drive transgresses the parameters of (analytic) evidence by blindly following psychoanalytic reason's rule of the relation between present effect (a repeated phenomenon) and past cause (an origin of the repeated phenomenon). Freud fails to respect the limits imposed by finite, ontogenetic experience in proposing that the conservative nature of *Trieb* is invariably fixated upon the absolute zero of inorganicity. Repetition compulsion merits assuming a mechanism responsible for demanding the iteration of specific elements of an experienced past; it's indicative of a cyclical, repetitious (a)temporality embedded within (and yet out of joint with) the fabric of chronological time. However, it does not merit assuming a retroactive nostalgia transcending the ontogenetic sphere of the subject and its lived history.

Another illustration of Freud's conflation of repetition with regression is his equivocation between the constancy of homeostasis and the return to an absolute zero.[35] Freud alleges that the psychical apparatus seeks to keep "tension"—excitations, whether emanating from the external

world or from the internal id—at a constant level. He refers to excitational, energetic constancy, achieved via the process of repetitiously effectuated "binding," as a precondition for the pleasure principle. Excessive stimulation must be "worked off" by the psyche—a traumatic event is abreacted by being repetitiously recollected.[36] The stimulations triggered by drives are discharged by the ego through the fulfillment of a drive-aim via the mediation of a drive-object. This second source of excitations is, in Freud's view, certainly the more powerful and compelling of the two. The individual can avoid external stimuli, whereas internal stimuli, as the incessant demands of the axis of iteration, cannot be avoided. In "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," Freud writes:

> External stimuli impose only the single task of withdrawing from them; this is accomplished by muscular movements, one of which eventually achieves that aim and thereafter, being the expedient movement, becomes a hereditary disposition. Instinctual stimuli, which originate from within the organism, cannot be dealt with by this mechanism. Thus they make far higher demands on the nervous system and cause it to undertake involved and interconnected activities by which the external world is so changed as to afford satisfaction to the internal source of stimulation. Above all, they oblige the nervous system to renounce its ideal intention of keeping off stimuli, for they maintain an incessant and unavoidable afflux of stimulation. (*SE* 14: 120)

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud returns to this description of internal stimuli: The origin of projection—that is, the illusory externalization of internal phenomena as in, for example, the persecutory complexes of paranoid psychotics—is the need to treat an internal excitation that is, in actuality, impossible to totally escape as an external excitation capable of being fled from.[37] If the constancy of excitation produced by the source and pressure of *Trieb* forces the psyche "to renounce its ideal intention of keeping off stimuli" due to "an incessant and unavoidable afflux of stimulation," then why does Freud designate the aim of the death drive as the absolute evacuation of all tension? Freud's metapsychology definitely supports the notion of energetic homeostasis as an economic principle of the psyche. However, it hardly seems to imply the sustained desire of this apparatus to rid itself entirely of all stimulation. In fact, this "ideal intention" must be renounced, since no mechanisms permit the mastery of the drive's source and pressure, a mastery that would be necessary in order to achieve a zero-level of excitation.

In fact, Freud identifies *Trieb* as the very thing responsible for forcing the renunciation of an excitational zero as a possible goal. As a drive,

wouldn't the *Todestrieb* also thwart the ability of the psyche to evacuate all stimuli? At this juncture, a potential salvaging of the death drive becomes visible, despite the glaring inconsistencies in Freud's thought.[38] Two axioms of the second topography are relevant here: One, drives are internal generators of stimuli and, as unavoidable, permanently prevent the psyche from achieving a state of absolute rest; two, the death drive tends toward a state of absolute rest. But, if the death drive, as a drive, is also an internal generator of stimuli, then it inhibits its own aim, assuming this aim to be a total elimination of tension. And, Freud favors interpreting the *Todestrieb* as a speculative construction emblematic of the universal structure of *Trieb* as a metapsychological concept.[39] What must be concluded from this? *The death drive is a self-defeating mechanism, and, if it represents all drives, then Freudian theory implies that drives are, by definition, designed to sabotage themselves.*

An outline for a new theory of the drives—one that internalizes the Freudian conflict motif within the differentiated structure of each and every drive—emerges from a series of Freud's contradictory claims. Freud expresses hope that clinical evidence might eventually prompt renouncing the notion of a *Todestrieb*—"the distinction between the two classes of instincts does not seem sufficiently assured and it is possible that facts of clinical analysis may be found which will do away with its pretension" (*SE* 19: 42). What Freud does not anticipate is that the means for significantly revising the death drive are to be found within the theoretical resources of his own metapsychology.

7

# The Lacanian Drive *Topos*

## §21 *Objet petit a*—The Rift in the Drive-Object

The Borromean knot emphasizes the immanent co-implication of the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. It contains an implicit warning to anyone who wishes to exegetically untangle the various threads of Lacanian theory: As soon as one starts to speak about a particular facet of Lacan's work, one must always–already have brought into play the other facets. Similarly, Lacan's engagements with the Freudian *Trieb*—these engagements are located in a number of different places in Lacan's oeuvre, spanning several distinct phases of his thought—present a dense web of various issues. Much like the bind of the Borromean knot, Lacan transforms *Trieb* into a knotting of concepts—need, demand, desire, *das Ding*, *die Sache,* and so on. And, each of these concepts, like Lacan's three structural registers, is intimately interwoven with the constellation formed by the other concepts. Treating any of these terms in isolation results in the utter dissolution of the knot, the loss of the very theoretical object being analyzed. This is as much a Gordian knot as a Borromean one. Scrutinizing *objet petit a,* in particular from the temporal standpoint developed previously, is perhaps the most elegant means of cutting this knot so as to begin tracing the multiple nuances of the Lacanian *Trieb.*

Although dubbed the "cause of desire," object *a* is assigned the status of being the object of the drive—"this object that is the cause of desire is the object of the drive—that is to say, the object around which the drive turns" (*SXI,* 243).[1] As the paradigmatic drive-object, object *a* isn't merely some particular type of material object (for example, a certain body part). Given that Lacan posits it as the object of drive in general, it functions as a formal, metapsychological category defining a specific structural posi-

tion in the ensemble of mechanisms constituting the overall structure of *Trieb.* Object *a* is, therefore, a role in the drama of the drives, with various determinate entities playing a part by giving body to this metapsychological variable—"this object . . . is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object, and whose agency we know only in the form of the lost object, the *petit a*" (*SXI,* 180).[2]

Kantian philosophy is an important historical precursor of Lacanian thought, especially as regards the subject. Additionally, the gap between noumenal and phenomenal realms is reflected in the dehiscent organization of *Trieb:* The noumenal axis of iteration's impossible demand for an atemporal repetition of an initial object cathexis is necessarily routed through the temporal matrix of the phenomenal axis of alteration. Lacan differs somewhat in his approach to Freudian drive theory. Instead of internally cleaving the drive into two conflictual axes, Lacan divides the drive-object qua object *a.* In the seventh seminar, he makes extensive use of the Kantian-Freudian distinction between the thing-in-itself (*das Ding an sich*) and the object-for-another (*die Sache*) in developing an early version of object *a.* The object pole of Lacanian theory, as well as its subject pole, is conceptually indebted to Kant.

Furthermore, Lacan speaks of an exact parallel between the split subject ($) and object *a.* The dehiscence between Lacan's subject of enunciation (synchronic) and subject of the utterance (diachronic) represents a structuralist translation of the Kantian antagonism between the transcendental and phenomenal/empirical dimensions of subjectivity. Thus, temporality proves to be the wedge forcing a division in subjective structure. Object *a* mirrors this temporal division of the subject:

> [T]he object manifested here in the phantasy carries the mark of what we have called on many occasions the splitting of the subject.
>
> What we find, is undoubtedly here the same topological space which defines the object of desire, it is probable that this number being inherent is only the mark of the inaugural temporality which constitutes this field. (*SIX,* 6/20/62)

For both Kant and Lacan, the "inaugural temporality" governing the constitution of the subject is the irreconcilable tension between timelessness (Kant's noumenal subject and/or Lacan's synchronic *ça parle*) and temporalization (Kant's phenomenal subject and/or Lacan's diachronic temporality of the signifying chain). In the B version of the "Transcendental Deduction," Kant proposes what could be called a "reciprocity thesis" regarding the rapport between the transcendental unity of apperception

and the various objects of experience: The subject knows itself to be unified (more specifically, constant over time as an invariant "I think") strictly by virtue of the unity of its cognized objects (each and every "x" serving as an intentional correlate of thinking activity).[3] Objects bear, so to speak, the fingerprints of the subject, reflecting back to it the unity it must itself possess in order for it to experience objects as unified and enduring referents of its mental acts. Likewise, Lacan establishes a homology between $ and *a* in terms of temporality: The split in the subject is mirrored back to it by the divisions it encounters in its libidinal objects. However, in what way is this aspect of Lacanian theory related—at least in Lacan's view—to the Kantian distinction between thing and object?

According to Kant, the subject is capable of perceiving and/or cognizing entities only insofar as they conform to both the forms of intuition—that is, all entities experienced by the subject must be determinate spatio-temporal presentations—as well as the categories of the understanding. The structure of subjectivity—the Kantian subject is an a priori formal template prefiguring all possible experiential contents cognized by this same subject—admits into the sphere of experience exclusively those entities constituted as objects. By "object," Kant means something molded into a presentation by the a priori template of subjective cognition. However, Kant maintains the existence of an ontological realm beyond the limits of possible (subjective) experience, a realm unconditioned by the structure of subjectivity (thus differentiating himself from the solipsistic idealism of someone like Berkeley). The object is something constituted by a subject, whereas the thing-in-itself is an entity independent of the constraints imposed in the constitution of an object of experience. Most crucial in this particular establishment of a link between Kant and Lacan is the fact that the thing-in-itself is not subjected to the constraint of the pure form of intuition as time. The Kantian *Ding an sich,* in lying beyond the phenomenal screen of subjective inner sense, is, given the alleged ideality of time, atemporal.

In the opening session of the fourteenth seminar, Lacan summarizes what he takes to be essential about object *a*—"'What have you done then,' one of them said to me, 'what need did you have to invent this little *a*-object?' I think, in truth, that taking things from a broader horizon it was about time" (*SXIV,* 11/16/66). Later, Lacan reiterates this point—"the *objet petit a* is tied to this dimension of time" (*SXXI,* 4/9/74). Apropos the distinction between *das Ding* and *die Sache,* object *a* can be encapsulated in a succinct formula: *Objet petit a* is the atemporal *das Ding* (that is, the Real locus of *jouissance* within the unconscious) once subjected to the phenomenal, temporalizing concatenation of diachronically unfolding object-choices (the Imaginary objects of the ego as regulated by the plea-

sure principle, as well as the Symbolic features repeated within sequences of object-choices). In other words, object *a* is the Lacanian matheme designating a loss introduced by the temporalization of the drive-object, what Lacan refers to as the *je ne sais quoi* of that mysterious, ineffable "something" lost by virtue of repetition.

Before a thorough elucidation of object *a,* more needs to be said about Lacan's recontextualization of the Kantian thing–object dichotomy. Furthermore, certain crucial differences between Kant and Lacan deserve to be mentioned. The Kantian thing-in-itself is inherently inaccessible to the subject at a transcendental level; the subject never encounters this thing, since such an encounter is possible exclusively on the condition that *das Ding* be transformed into *das Objekt.* Hence, in Kant's schema, phenomenal subject and experiential object are complementary, with the thing-in-itself being an excess element posited as structurally external to these complements.[4]

Lacan's twist, accomplished though a juxtaposition of Kant and Freud, is to internalize the split between thing and object within the field of the historicized, genetic subject of psychoanalysis. The dehiscence between thing and object is subsumed under the heading of subjectivity itself. In several places, Lacan refers to his version of *das Ding* as the archaic object embedded within the heart of the subject's unconscious—"*Das Ding* is a primordial function which is located at the level of the initial establishment of the gravitation of the unconscious *Vorstellungen*" (*SVII,* 62).[5] Further on in the same text, he states that, "the relations of the subject to something primordial, its attachment to the fundamental, most archaic of objects, for which my field of *das Ding,* defined operationally, establishes the framework" (*SVII,* 106). The Lacanian Thing is thus a remainder from, as Lacan himself puts it, a "logically and chronologically" prior period of psychical structure. As extimate, *das Ding* is not foreign to the subject simply because it's metaphysically exterior to the template of subjective cognition (as per Kant). The unconscious Thing is an alien, inaccessible presence at the very heart of the subject's own internal psychical order, an irreversibly lost fragment of primordial experience "in the subject more than the subject itself"—"It is because the *a* is something from which the child is separated in a fashion that is in a way internal to the sphere of his own existence, that it is well and truly the small *a*" (*SX,* 5/15/63).

The drives are fixated upon *das Ding.*[6] *Trieb* continually seeks to "refind" the primordial object, the first gratifying experience qua inaugural point of drive cathexis, through the substitutive intermediaries of later object-choices. Lacan alludes to the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,* in which Freud claims that the drive-object is inherently a "lost object."[7] This

Freudian axiom is of great importance to Lacan, who mentions its centrality frequently.[8] The Lacanian interpretation of object loss requires retroactively reading the 1905 *Three Essays* through the lens of the 1930 *Civilization and Its Discontents.* In the first chapter of the latter text, Freud explains that the differentiated topographical agencies of the psychical apparatus are genetic, historicized products of specific formative processes. According to Freud, the individual, at the earliest stages of experience, does not conceive of himself/herself as a subject-like entity. In other words, prior to the formation of an ego, the individual has no sense of being an isolated locus of an organized field of objects and events contrasted against a discrete self. Freud uses the phrase "oceanic feeling" to characterize this earliest experiential state: Without the ego's "clear and sharp lines of demarcation" (me versus not-me, self versus other, and so on), the nascent subject-to-be recognizes no well-defined distinction between, on the one hand, its body and sensory perceptions, and, on the other hand, objects and other individuals circulating within this fluid phenomenal sphere.[9]

Consequently, prior to the genesis of the ego's division of the experiential domain along a subject–object fault line, the breast of the mother (taking a favorite Freudian example) is not experienced as a separate object. From the infant's perspective, mouth, milk, and breast blend together in a sensorial flux. The breast isn't an object per se at this juncture to the extent that the infant fails to "constitute" it as such. However, after the appearance of the ego, in which the young child acquires a sense of itself as a discrete experiential locus, the breast is qualitatively different:

> [T]here are objects which, in the body, are defined by being, in a way—with respect to the pleasure principle—*outside the body* (*hors corps*). This is what the *a*-objects are . . .
>
> The *breast,* this object which must indeed be defined as this something which, even though it is stuck, attached, as on a surface, parasitically like a placenta, remains this something that the body of the child can legitimately claim as belonging to him. One sees this enigmatic belonging clearly. I mean, of course, that through an accident in the evolution of living beings, it appears that in this way, for some of them, something of them remains attached to the body of the being who engendered them. (*SXIV,* 6/14/67)

This difference between the pre-egoistic breast (the breast as "belonging to the body of the child") and the post-egoistic breast (the breast as an object belonging to the [m]other) is, in large part, the difference between *das Ding* and *die Sache* respectively.[10] The shift in the infant's experience

of the breast—initially, it's experienced as part of the infant's own body, while it's later "lost" (that is, separated off from this presubjective body) in being experienced as an object distinct from the body[11]—is responsible for the appearance of object *a*. And, in passing Kant through Freud, Lacan emphasizes that the thing-in-itself is not barred from the subject by virtue of the nature of full-fledged epistemological subjectivity. *Das Ding* becomes inaccessible due to the metamorphoses of psychoanalysis's genetic subject, by virtue of the phenomenological–structural alteration of the subjective framework shaping the constitution of, in Freud's example, the breast as an object. By reinterpreting the Kantian thing–object division as an outcome of the genetic nature of subjectivity—as a split internal to the structure of the subject itself—Lacan maintains that, "subjective experience makes appear this something that we are calling the *a*-object" (*SXII,* 3/3/65).

The dilemma of the drives is that, as essentially conservative/regressive, they seek to recover the initial version of the object satisfying their aim. In the case of the breast, the oral drive demands a repetition of the first experience of pleasurable gratification associated with the breast. However, for both Freud and Lacan, the historical genesis of the subject–object dichotomy is a one-way street. Once the subjective framework organizing the experiential field of the individual shifts through the defiles of the mirror stage and its analogues, the alteration is, for all intents and purposes, irreversible (except, perhaps, in cases of psychosis). Lacan's descriptions of object *a* as the result of a "cut" implicitly refer to the subject–object division inaugurated by the crystallization of the ego's lines of demarcation as responsible for the separation from *das Ding*—"the line of separation . . . there is produced the dropping, the *niederfallen* typical of the approach of an *a* which is nevertheless more essential to the subject than any other part of himself" (*SX,* 3/6/63).[12] On the nether side of this division, all that the libidinal economy is left with is the Imaginary object, the diluted reminder of the Real Thing (which nevertheless retains a power of attraction by evoking an ostensibly lost *jouissance* sought by the drives).[13] Object *a* is, at one and the same time, a residual remainder produced by the incision separating subject from object as well as a reminder hearkening back to an alluring, presubjective Real presumably rendered inaccessible through this dividing process.[14]

Additionally, the very repetitious reinstantiation of *das Ding* demanded by *Trieb* is itself implicated in the loss of the Thing. Lacan's musings on the logic of repetition emphasize precisely this paradoxical dynamic: The initial element repeated (A), in its uniqueness as a first occurrence, cannot be captured by successive recurrences of this same element, these being marked as different qua temporally subsequent ($A^2$,

$A^3$ . . .). The diachronous sequence of object-choices catalyzed by the drives interferes with the synchronicity of the archaic *das Ding,* itself negatively enshrined in the core of the unconscious as something missing. Object *a* is therefore conceivable as a by-product of the drives' compulsion to repeat—"The *a* . . . is linked purely and simply to repetition in itself" (*SXIV,* 3/8/67). Lacan's central point is that the loss of the drive-object is not, as Freud supposes, a simple result of external barriers being brought to bear on the *Innenwelt* of the subject's instinctual life. Instead, the repetition compulsion of *Trieb*—namely, the axis of iteration as a mechanism of the drive—participates as an internal saboteur, a source of failure intrinsic to the basic function of drives.[15] The drives are complicit in generating the loss of the same Real that they so tirelessly seek—"it is the real that the drives mythify" (Lacan 1996, 418).

The drives demand an impossible recovery of the breast as a pre-egoistic Thing. All that they are capable of "re-finding" are objectival substitutes—"By snatching at its object, the drive learns in a sense that this is precisely not the way it will be satisfied" (*SXI,* 167). Elsewhere, Lacan proclaims that, "The object is a failure (*un raté*). The essence of the object is failure" (*SXX,* 58). Just as the Kantian subject (as a *Ding an sich*) vainly seeks consciousness of itself through the interfering mediation of discrete, spatio-temporal presentations (as various phenomenal self-objectifications), so also does *Trieb* pursue the Real Thing through the concatenations of Imaginary semblances incapable of ever being adequate to the aims of this pursuit.[16] The Lacanian drive is a circuit left over from a pre-egoistic, pre-subject/object experiential continuum, a circuit encircling a point rendered inaccessible by the screen of the Imaginary (as well as by the unstable modulations of the signifiers of the Symbolic). The montage-like layering of Imaginary–Symbolic reality (with its various objects) over the Real turns the drive into a dysfunctional loop, a futile rotation around an empty center—"the *objet petit a* . . . exists (or, rather, insists) in a kind of curved space in which, the more you approach it, the more it eludes your grasp (or, the more you possess it, the greater the lack)" (Žižek 1999a, 100). Lacan signifies this loss resulting from the phenomenological–structural transformation of the atemporal Real Thing into a temporalized Imaginary object as *objet petit a.*

If the drives are attached to object *a* as a representative of a lost form of enjoyment, then is it possible to define *Trieb* as oriented around the quest for satisfaction? In "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," Freud conceives of satisfaction as the invariable aim of all drives—"The aim [*Ziel*] of an instinct is in every instance satisfaction" (*SE* 14: 122).[17] Lacan calls this claim into question vis-à-vis the problem of sublimation. And, he explicitly connects this problem to the difference, represented by object *a,* between

Thing and object.[18] The conservative demands of *Trieb* aim at the impossible recovery of *das Ding,* a thing made absent by alterations in the subjective framework governing the appearance of objects. Thus, the drives aim not at satisfaction per se, but at a thwarted, inaccessible form of enjoyment.

In his fourth seminar on "The Object Relation," Lacan concisely summarizes the temporal nature of the conflict embodied by object *a* (although, in 1956, Lacan has yet to coin the technical neologism "*objet petit a*"). He speaks of an irreconcilable tension between the object sought after by the drives and the object that actually offers itself to the drives—"There is . . . always an essential division, fundamentally conflictual, in the re-found object, and, in the very act of its re-finding, there is therefore always a discordance in the re-found object in relation to the object sought after" (*SIV,* 53). If object *a*—as the avatar of this difference between the archaic coordinate of drive cathexis and the actual object attainable by the drive in present circumstances—is the paradigmatic object of *Trieb,* then the drives contain the cause of their own inherent margin of dissatisfaction. As Lacan puts it in the eleventh seminar, the drive-object as object *a* "tricks" the drive into endlessly circling around a futile, irrecoverable point of cathexis.[19]

In developing his interpretation of drive theory in light of object *a,* Lacan aptly observes that Freud's inclusion of sublimation as a vicissitude of *Trieb* subverts the simultaneous insistence on satisfaction as its primary aim. The argument unfolds as follows: One, the aim of all drives is satisfaction; two, satisfaction results from obtaining the drive-aim; three, sublimation is the product of aim-inhibition; four, sublimation, according to Freud, is the attainment of satisfaction after the fact of aim-inhibition—therefore, Lacan concludes, the satisfaction of the drives is not equivalent to the attainment of an aim, since satisfaction can be obtained even when an aim is not reached.[20] Because the drives so readily accept the reality principle's imposition of obstacles to enjoyment, Lacan contends that the meaning of "satisfaction" with respect to the drives is entirely ambiguous—"the use of the function of the drive has for me no other purpose than to put in question what is meant by satisfaction" (*SXI,* 166). After placing satisfaction in question, what does Lacan propose as an alternate orientation for the drives?

Lacan forges a distinction between "aim" and "goal."[21] The drive-aim qua satisfaction is malleable; it can be diverted or entirely inhibited. That is to say, the seeking of pleasurable gratification is not a necessary feature of *Trieb.* Lacan labels the aim that gets inhibited the "goal." However, he insinuates that drives do have a certain invariable orientation, namely, a true aim—the aim that is never inhibited, no matter what vicissitudes the

drive is subjected to by reality.[22] Interestingly enough, the genuine aim of the Lacanian drive is the repetition of a movement toward a thwarted goal:

> It is Sisyphus . . . who bears on our interest here. His continuous pushing of the stone up the hill only to have it roll down again served . . . as the literary model for the third of Zeno's paradoxes: we can never cover a given distance *X,* because, to do so, we must first cover half this distance, and to cover half, we must cover a quarter of it, and so on, ad infinitum. A goal, once reached, always retreats anew. Can we not recognize in this paradox the very nature of the psychoanalytic notion of *drive,* or more properly the Lacanian distinction between its *aim* and its *goal*? The goal is the final destination, while the aim is what we intend to do, i.e., the way itself. Lacan's point is that the real purpose of the drive is not its goal (full satisfaction) but its aim: the drive's ultimate aim is simply to reproduce itself as drive, to return to its circular path, to continue its path to and from the goal. The real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit. Therein consists the paradox of Sisyphus: once he reaches his goal, he experiences the fact that the real aim of his activity is the way itself, the alternation of ascent and descent. (Žižek 1991b, 5)

The Sisyphean drives savor their own frustration, inhabiting the blocked pathways of their movement encircling an impossible satisfaction.[23] Simply put, the Lacanian drive enjoys the inadequate means to an unattainable end. In Freudian parlance, once the reality principle imposes an aim-inhibition, the drive surrenders its initial form of pleasure only to self-reflexively cathect the trajectory toward this abandoned aim. From this broad metapsychological perspective, Lacan surmises that all drives operate "beyond the pleasure principle."[24]

In a paper delivered during the thirteenth seminar, André Green illustrates how object *a,* sublimation, and temporality form a tightly woven triad of co-implicated problematics. Green proposes that object *a* operates at the interstices of two axes—an "axis of synchrony" and an "axis of diachrony."[25] On the side of the former, one finds the originary unconscious gravitation around the archaic, primordial fixations of the drives. On the side of the latter, the atemporal coordinates of the drives are veiled behind the unfurling sequences of varying object-choices departing from said coordinates. Object *a* straddles the line between these two axes. And yet, the interpretation of this object maintained here up until now may have given the misleading impression that the atemporal Real (that is, *das Ding*) is simply eclipsed in full by the advent of Imaginary–Symbolic reality.

On the contrary, object *a* is a sublimator of the drives (with Lacan recasting sublimation via his concept of "desire"). In fact, this is Lacan's answer to the paradox of Freudian sublimation. Why are the drives capable of deriving a degree of pleasure from substitutive object-choices? How can an object that is lost invariably be re-found? Although the phenomenal side of the object irrevocably disrupts unmediated access to the Thing of *jouissance,* each object-choice is selected by the libidinal economy of the subject insofar as it contains within it a reminder/remainder of *das Ding*.[26] Using a simple example, another woman is capable of standing in for the Oedipally forbidden mother because this woman contains something ineffably "in her more than her." Or, as Lacan puts it, sublimation "raises the object to the dignity of the Thing."[27] The precondition for an object being elevated to a central place in the drive—the place of "the Thing"—is that it bears a mark or feature associationally linked to an initial fixation preserved by the unconscious. Lacan calls this element that signifies the Real Thing from within the image of the object the "unary trait."[28] A substitutive object-choice is possible once a unary trait triggers the process wherein an ordinary, quotidian entity is transubstantiated into a semblance of *das Ding*.[29] The entity thereby becomes the *objet petit a.*

Translated back into Freud's vocabulary, object *a* designates the entire series of subliminatory object-choices stemming from a particular, prohibited primary love-object. Because of its role in the sublimation of the drives, Lacan states that, "No element can have the function of *a*-object if it cannot be associated to other objects in what is called a group structure" (*SXIII,* 6/1/66).[30] This "group structure"—that is, the diachronic concatenation of substitutive objects—is precisely what introduces the temporalization responsible for making difference appear within repetition, for the unavoidable transubstantiation of *das Ding* into *die Sache.* In Lacan's system, each object functions as a "signifier," namely, an element whose value is defined on the basis of its relationships to other elements within a given set. As new object-choices are added to the existing group of prior object-choices, these additions alter the value of the previous drive representatives retained by the unconscious—the chain of object-choices, like the "chain of signifiers," exhibits the *après-coup* effect of the *point de capiton.* This "axis of diachrony" (to use Green's terminology), in which pure repetition is impossible and a temporal pulsation retroactively generates the loss of the Real around which the drives circle, is nonetheless only one side of *objet petit a.*

The other side of object *a* is that which, despite the constant modulations occurring at the level of *die Sache*—the *Vorstellungen* of *Trieb*—"remains the same in all possible objects." Object *a* is not just the temporalized group of drive representatives, but is also the divided locus of a

conflict between this temporal order and something else resisting temporalization. However, the definition of exactly what "it" is that keeps insistently reappearing in each and every object-choice is not entirely clear in Lacanian theory. Especially given Lacan's references to Kant in the seventh seminar, one is led to think that the Real Thing, the *Ding an sich* of a *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle, is the causal agent of repetition compulsion. But, surprisingly, the register of the Symbolic—and not the Real—is often cited as the source of repetition.

Bruce Fink offers a blatantly linguistic explanation of the Lacanian "cause of repetition." According to Fink, at the level of the material Real (the inaccessible "in itself" dimension of the world prior to and/or apart from human reality's constitution of it), no two entities or events are ever identical. He argues as follows:

> For no two 'things' are ever identical or exactly the same. The very fact that we can say that the same book hits the same table twice, i.e., two times, means that time has intervened, the two events being situated differently, chronologically speaking, thus constituting separate events involving objects which can be temporally distinguished.
>
> What generally allows us to consider two things or events as identical is the signifier. All *identification*—whether in human experience or at the theoretical level—is based on the taking up of events, objects, etc. into the symbolic order, their being attributed particular words or names. (Fink 1995b, 223)

Fink continues:

> Heterogeneous things may be equated because one signifier covers all of them. At this level, repetition thus implies the 'return' of something that would be different the second time but for the signifier. You can only step into the same river twice because you have a word or name for it . . . (Fink 1995b, 224)

The usefulness of these remarks lies in their emphasis on how temporality disrupts the capacity for pure repetition—the passage of time introduces an ineliminable margin of difference between repeated entities and events. However, Fink's position elicits two criticisms.

First, Fink takes for granted a problematic equivocation between the Symbolic and language. If his reasoning were to be applied to the relation between *Trieb* and object *a*, then the claim would be that the drives are only capable of seeking the "same" object-type to the extent that a

word/name is assigned to this object-type. The repetition compulsion of *Trieb* would be nothing more than a consistency hanging solely upon a linguistic thread. Although it can be a linguistic unity, the unary trait—the libidinal "signifier" permitting an object to serve as a semblance of *das Ding*—is not necessarily a word or name (see §30). Any feature iterated throughout a series of object-choices qualifies as a unary trait, regardless of whether this feature is a part of language or a sensory quality of the object.

Second, Fink begs the question of why *Trieb* willingly follows the lead of signifiers marking discrete sets of objects. Fink's conception of the signifier as the active agent of repetition assigns to an inert, extrinsic element the ability to almost magically dictate the activity of the psyche. Is it really the signifier itself that "causes" the compulsion to repeat, or is it that this compulsion latches onto the signifier as an efficacious cathetic reference point? Given than no attention is paid to either the source or pressure of the drives—the quasi-somatic side of *Trieb* that Freud himself views as responsible for repetition compulsion—this aspect of Fink's explication of Lacanian theory is perhaps representative of an attempt to too fully desomaticize psychoanalysis. Lacan merely stipulates that psychoanalysis offers nothing to biology—that is, a field, obeying the methodology of the observational sciences of nature, which takes organisms and organic relations as its exclusive objects of investigation. He never proclaims that it consequently has nothing to do with the body.[31]

And yet, this second objection to Fink's diagnosis of the cause of repetition leads to questions about Lacan's employment of object *a* apropos drive theory. Object *a* is both the central coordinate of the orbital movement of the drives and the "cause of desire." (Although the drives find satisfaction in encircling a never-quite-achieved goal, desire is what remains unsatisfied with the object causing it.) Like Jean Laplanche's source-object of the drive, the Lacanian *objet petit a* is seemingly made entirely responsible for animating the libidinal economy of the subject. Isn't this to forget that the drive-object is, so to speak, only one-fourth of the total structure of the Freudian *Trieb*? If Lacanian theory is rooted in a return to Freud, why are the source and pressure of the drive not mentioned in explanations of repetition compulsion? François Roustang remarks that, "a machine, in order to function, has to be endowed with energy" (Roustang 1990, 33).[32] Similarly, an object (even a Lacanian object), in order to play a part in the multifaceted apparatus of *Trieb,* requires being endowed with its alluring power by something other than itself, something that Freud struggles to describe with his metaphor of psychical energy.

## §22 Energy versus Structure—Lacan contra Freud

With reference to "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," Lacan cautions that *Trieb* must not be equated with energetic force alone. By definition, drives always intimately involve a nonsomatic object (the *petit a*) as part and parcel of their own organization. Lacan writes:

> Now, is what we are dealing with in the drive essentially organic? Is it thus that we should interpret what Freud says in a text belonging to *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*—that the drive, *Trieb,* represents the *Ausserung der Trägheit,* some manifestation of inertia in the organic life? Is it a simple notion, which might be completed with reference to some storing away of this inertia, namely, to fixation, *Fixierung*?
>
> Not only do I not think so, but I think that a serious examination of Freud's elaboration of the notion of drive runs counter to it.
>
> Drive (*pulsion*) is not thrust (*poussée*). *Trieb* is not *Drang,* if only for the following reason. In an article written in 1915—that is, a year after the *Einführung zum Narzissmus,* you will see the importance of this reminder soon—entitled *Trieb und Triebschicksale*—one should avoid translating it by *avatar, Triebwandlungen* would be avatar, *Schicksal* is adventure, vicissitude—in this article, then, Freud says that it is important to distinguish four terms in the drive: *Drang,* thrust; *Quelle,* the source; *Objekt,* the object; *Ziel,* the aim. (*SXI,* 162)

The drive-source designates the anatomical locale from which the drive originates. The energetic, economic dimension of drive is the pressure (*Drang*) emanating from the source. However, as Lacan rightfully points out, Freud's 1915 definition of *Trieb* prevents a narrow focus solely on this energetic level of drive, since three other terms would thereby be neglected.[33]

Lacan dismisses the theoretical utility of Freud's energetic metaphor. He notes that libido (a term designating the energy of the drives) does nothing more than introduce a fruitless, specious quantification into the theory of the drives—"Libido, in Freud's work, is an energy that can be subjected to a kind of quantification which is as easy to introduce in theory as it is useless, since only certain *quanta* of constancy are recognized therein" (Lacan 1996, 417). Simply describing drives in terms of an accumulation and discharge of an almost mythical "psychical energy" does nothing to explain the mechanisms in conjunction with which *Trieb* operates—repression, sublimation, inversion, and so on. Without examining the function of representation in the drives, Lacan alleges that one

is powerless to offer an adequate theoretical elucidation of *Trieb.* He takes seriously Freud's stipulation that drives cannot be grasped except through their psychical representatives. If this is so, then the energetic description of drives is pointless, since this energy can only remain a vague presupposition behind the manifest concatenation of object-choices linked to a specific drive.[34] For Lacan, the concept of libido is "*entièrement abstraite,*" that is, incapable of serving as a foundation for further developments of psychoanalytic drive theory.[35]

Lacan asks what is actually meant by "energy" in analytic theory. He restates the familiar fact that Freud, from the 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology* onwards, borrows this motif from nineteenth-century physics. What is energy according to scientific practice? Is it a force that exists as a substance-in-itself, as pure, tangible *Stoff*? On the contrary, Lacan points out, science's energy is a strictly measurable, mathematical value. Energy exists, not as substance, but as a calculable function discerned through a series of relations between nonenergetic elements:

> —Natural energy . . . something to be expended, insofar as a dam can store it and make it useful. However, it's not because the dam looks picturesque in a landscape that energy is natural. That a 'life force' should constitute that expenditure is a crude metaphor. Because energy is not a substance, which, for example, improves or goes sour with age; it's a numerical constant that a physicist has to find in his calculations, so as to be able to work. (Lacan 1990a, 18)

In physics, energy is substantialized exclusively to the extent that it's numerically calculated as a value in relation to other components—for example, objects with mass, or barriers with resistance. For Lacan, it has no other ontological status than this designation within the Symbolic universe of science's mathematized world. The dam image, briefly mentioned by Lacan in his televised interview of 1974, comes from the fourth seminar of 1956–1957. In a dam, the energy of the flowing water is measured and harnessed as hydroelectricity when channeled through the architecture of the dam's walls. Without this man-made construction, the energy of the water remains merely an abstract and potential energy. It becomes known—that is, quantifiable—in passing through a structure that registers its force as a usable amount.[36] Through this metaphor, Lacan concludes that Freud's energetics is a *méconnaissance,* that is, a misguided conceptual translation of a Symbolic reality (akin to what Hegel calls "picture thinking," translating nonimagistic concepts into pictorial metaphors).[37] In physics, energy is an "x" that has a reality exclusively insofar as it yields a mathematically determinate quantity. So also in analysis—libidinal

energy is merely an "x" presupposed behind the structural vicissitudes of *Trieb* (known via *Vorstellungen*).[38]

Regarding the relation between drive theory and this critique of Freudian energetics, the dam image permits grasping why Lacan insists on paying equal attention to all four facets of *Trieb* (and not just to the *Drang*). The water flowing through the dam is analogous to the axis of iteration; the drive-source is the quasi-natural materiality of drive (like the water itself), and the drive-pressure is the force resulting from this material (like the water's energy harnessed by the dam). But, as Lacan warns, this dimension of drive remains an unknown variable until one takes into account the structural arrangement of aims and objects through which this energy is diverted. The architecture of the dam is thus a metaphor for the axis of alteration. Drives are apprehended through their series of investments and displacements.[39] The idea of an independent energy apart from such vicissitudes is a theoretical speculation, much like the myth of *Thanatos* as the pure death drive existing in isolation from *Eros.*

Additionally, Lacan associates the energetic metaphor not only with the *Drang* of *Trieb,* but also with the entire theme of affect in psychoanalysis. Lacan criticizes the significance of affect in the same manner as he dismisses the utility of libido: Both affect and libido are vague, abstract quantifications providing no genuine illumination of the underlying structuration of the unconscious.[40] It is indeed true that numerous analytic authors have a tendency to describe affectivity as a mobile quota of energy. And, like the libidinal force of the drives, affect is something displaceable; affects are relatively free-floating in the psychical system, being capable of entertaining varying associational connections with different determinate contents at different times. However, Freud clearly maintains that affects themselves are never repressed. In repression, the ideational representative to which an affect is initially attached is barred from consciousness. The affect, instead of succumbing to repression along with its representative, remains within the field of consciousness. Except now, the affect becomes linked with an ideational representative not directly associated with the repressed representative (that is, the affect is displaced). The unconscious is devoid of affect—"Strictly speaking, then . . . there are no unconscious affects as there are unconscious ideas" (*SE* 14: 178).

If the unconscious is the proper object of psychoanalysis, then affectivity is of relatively little importance. When one analyzes the drives, one is guided by the traces stemming from concatenations of object-choices (what Lacan conceives of as the "signifying chains" of the drives).[41] In a parallel fashion, when the analyst is confronted with affective phenomena in the realm of the analysand's narrated conscious experience,

the key to understanding such manifestations lies in the interlinked set of representatives within which affects circulate—"I insisted on the fact that Freud emphasizes that it is not the affect that is repressed. The affect . . . goes off somewhere else, as best it can" (*SXI,* 217).[42] The affects themselves offer no genuine access to a nonaffective unconscious. Against the tendency to describe psychical functions as products of an internal energetic metabolism consisting of affects and libidinal forces, Lacan promotes the centrality of "structure."[43] Energetic factors do not determine the unfolding of ideational representatives. Instead, the Symbolic "play of signifiers"—that is, the interlinked system of psychical elements codetermining each other—dictates the movement of energy.

As early as 1955, Lacan is adamant about this inversion of the priority of energy over structure. He perceives a deep-seated complicity between psychoanalysis' pseudoscientific energetics and the depth psychological reading of Freud: Psychical energy is a fundamental "substance" issuing from the libidinal cauldron of an instinctual, interior id. Although Freud speaks about *Trieb* itself as a "myth" of psychoanalysis, Lacan specifies that it is the energetic description of the drives that relies upon a suspect mythologization derived from nineteenth-century physics.[44] He states:

> Among the energy equivalences we can apprehend with respect to a living organism, we can only really know about metabolism, that is, the balance sheet—what goes in and what comes out. There are quantities of energy the organism assimilates, by various means, and there's what, taking everything into account—muscular expenditure, effort, dejections—comes out of the mechanism. To be sure, the laws of thermodynamics are respected—there is degradation of energy. But about everything which happens inside, we know absolutely nothing. For one simple reason—we have no means whatever of measuring the interaction of neighbouring parts, in the way that we can in the physical world, the specificity of an organism lying in that everything which happens in one of its points has repercussions in all the others.
>
> The libidinal economy is something which isn't equivalent, but is analogous. (*SII,* 95–96)

As an analogy for the psychical apparatus, Lacan's organism, if treated as an *Innenwelt* distinguished and isolated from the external environment, must remain a mystery for the outside investigator. The metabolic "balance sheet" referred to is a metaphor for the Imaginary and Symbolic mediation of the bodily Real. Just as the internal workings of the organism

reveal themselves through inputs and outputs manifest in an *Umwelt,* so also is psychical energy meaningful to the analyst only insofar as effects are registered within mediating, nonenergetic structures.

Lacan does not insist that a nonstructural level of the psyche is completely fictitious. He simply warns that a purely energetic "stuff" beyond the structural matrices of ideational representatives must be treated as, at best, an empty, hypothetical variable. Freud's own perspective on the status of analytic drive theory is similar—"The theory of the instincts is so to say our mythology. Instincts are mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness. In our work we cannot for a moment disregard them, yet we are never sure that we are seeing them clearly" (*SE* 22: 95). Although mythological, the drives are conceptually irremovable from the architecture of metapsychology. They are concepts making possible the very domain of psychoanalysis, along with its objects of investigation. More specifically, without the assumed notion of a displaceable axis of *Trieb* (as the mobile "quota" constantly referred to by Freud), the entire idea of libidinal vicissitudes (repression, sublimation, and so on) dissipates. What would serve to hypothetically link together concatenations of object-choices? What "remains the same" in all possible objects? Of course, this displaceable axis of drives, if abstracted from the sequences of ideational representations in which it is always–already entangled, becomes ineffable and vacuous. But, disposing of this axis because of its inability to function as a constitutive idea for a psychoanalytically inspired metaphysics is too hasty.

Without the unification of temporally discrete object-choices provided by the idea of a displaceable "x" remaining constant throughout such a series, object *a* would also disappear. Why is a seemingly lost, inaccessible "Real Thing" perpetually sought after behind the Imaginary–Symbolic façade of constituted objects? Exactly what is "it" that seeks *das Ding,* if one reasonably rejects the notion that the Thing itself is the autoreflexive cause of its own pursuit? What is activated by the appearance of the unary trait? Questions such as these lead the later Lacan to speak of an "enjoying substance" (*la substance jouissante*):

> Isn't that precisely what psychoanalytic experience presupposes?—the substance of the body, on the condition that it is defined only as that which enjoys itself (*se jouit*). That is, no doubt, a property of the living body, but we don't know what it means to be alive except for the following fact, that a body is something that enjoys itself (*cela se jouit*). (*SXX,* 23)

What does Lacan mean here by "substance"? The substance of psychoanalysis (*jouissance*) is a presupposition of analytic experience, an idea

designating an enigmatic, quasi-somatic dimension. Unlike Descartes, when Kant speaks of the "subject as substance," he is thinking primarily of the noumenal subject as a "necessary illusion" symptomatic of the psychological transcendental idea: The subject cannot avoid presupposing itself as a nonphenomenal self-sameness, an ipseity devoid of determinate attributes, although the limits of its own possible experience prevent it from ever knowing if this is objectively and ontologically true in itself. Lacan's *substance jouissante* is similar: Metapsychology cannot avoid positing a substantialized bodily enjoyment as the libidinal glue guaranteeing an analyzable coherence (that is, an atemporal unconscious framework) to disparate conscious phenomena (the temporal sequence of the drives' object-choices).[45] Nonetheless, as a presupposition intrinsic to the analytic field, this enjoyment is substantialized merely in that it plays a crucial role in securing the interests of psychoanalytic reason. (Further support for this is found in Lacan's theory of embodiment in terms of the *tuché–automaton* model of causality—see §23, and §§27–29.)

Hence, the accusations that Lacanian theory utterly lacks any conception of body and/or affect are relatively unjustified—he lacks a constitutive version of these conceptions, while retaining them as regulative metapsychological assumptions. However, as noted, Lacan consistently subjugates the affective body to nonsomatic, nonenergetic factors. Referring to his revision of psychoanalytic energetics, Lacan states:

> It's the same old thing when it comes to the story of my supposed neglect of affect. I just want an answer on this point: does an affect have to do with the body? A discharge of adrenaline—is that body or not? It upsets its functions, true. But what is there in it that makes it come from the soul? What it discharges is thought. (Lacan 1990a, 20)

This is a direct translation of the Freudian distinction between the somatic and the mental: "Thought"—the Symbolic medium of the extimate subject—is the trigger for what comes to be registered at the affective and/or corporeal level. For example, in a relatively faithful structuralist appropriation of Freud, Lacan interprets the physical symptoms of analysands as a matter of the body "suffering from the signifier"—the physical ailment operates as a metaphor for a nonphysical unconscious conflict.[46] The Lacanian *corps* is the plaything of unconscious thought—"Thought is in disharmony with the soul."[47] In this schema, although drives might be set in motion by somatic sources, they are necessarily routed through external matrices of mediation. Once modified by this detour, the drives become the Real "pound of flesh" inextricably caught up in a desomaticized psychical machine. The libidinal vitality of the subject

is canalized through the "defiles of the signifier," thereafter rebounding upon the body of the subject only to carve it up, to make it a *corps morcelé.*

The logic of Lacan's perspective on affectivity and embodiment is reflected in certain articulations concerning *objet petit a.* As the "cause of desire," this object is often portrayed as generating ex nihilo the entire range of phenomena that Freud hesitates to include within a strictly ideational, representational order—repetition compulsion, displaceable cathexes, affective quotas, and so on. Object *a,* whether read as Imaginary semblance or Symbolic signifier, is charged with the dual, paradoxical responsibility for being both the origin of desire as well as its final, teleological term. Speaking of a male patient who is attracted exclusively to women who disdain his affections, Fink writes:

> As long as he associates the cause (refusal by a woman) with an object (a specific woman), it seems to the outside observer that his desire is incited by the object—that it is correlated with a specific object, that it reaches out to a specific object. But as soon as that association is broken, as soon as it becomes impossible for him to imbue the object at hand with the trait or characteristic that turns him on—refusal—we see that what is crucial is not the object, the specific woman he gets involved with, but the trait or characteristic that arouses his desire.
>
> Desire thus is not so much *drawn toward* an object (Desire→Object) as *elicited by* a certain characteristic that can sometimes be read into a particular love object: desire is pushed not pulled (Cause→Desire). (Fink 1997a, 51)

The accuracy of this clear presentation of Lacan's conception of desire is not at issue here. What is at stake is assessing certain risks arising from such a description. Of course, in the Lacanian account of libidinal object-choice via object *a,* a specific mark (a unary trait) is responsible for catalyzing the subliminatory transformation of a banal, everyday entity into a *jouissance*-laden substitute for the archaic, lost Thing. In terms of sublimation, Fink's emphasis on desire being "pushed" (propelled into action by the unary trait) and not "pulled" (desire as moved by an attractive power specific to particular objects) is useful. But, what about the originary *das Ding*? From where does this Real Thing secure the capital drawn upon by later object-choices? Why is it that very precise traits and characteristics are sought throughout a series of desirable objects? Without an account of the difference between need and desire (in relation to *Trieb*), these questions cannot receive an adequate answer.

## §23 Need, Demand, Desire and the Lacanian Registers

Lacan's most frequently invoked descriptive metaphor for the drive is the notion of a "montage."[48] He stipulates that *Trieb* is best imagined as a juxtaposition of wildly different elements.[49] In the eleventh seminar, Lacan compares the drive to a surrealist collage:

> The *montage* of the drive is a *montage* which, first, is presented as having neither head nor tail—in the sense in which one speaks of *montage* in a surrealist collage . . . the resulting image would show the workings of a dynamo connected up to a gas-tap, a peacock's feather emerges, and tickles the belly of a pretty woman, who is lying there looking beautiful. Indeed, the thing begins to become interesting from this very fact, that the drive defines, according to Freud, all the forms of which one may reverse such a mechanism. This does not mean that one turns the dynamo upside-down—one unrolls its wires, it is they that become the peacock's feather, the gas-tap goes into the lady's mouth, and the bird's rump emerges in the middle. (*SXI,* 169)

What theoretical point underlies this humorous and playful employment of absurd imagery? Lacan's montage metaphor emphasizes two features of *Trieb:* One, the four constituents of drive (source, pressure, aim, and object) are situated within a variety of registers that are not necessarily coordinated with each other (in other words, the structure of *Trieb* contains internal differences-in-kind); two, the vicissitudes of drive are not merely accidental modifications befalling the libidinal forces of an *Innenwelt,* but are permutations intrinsic to the metapsychological structuration of the drives. In Lacan's view, the drive-source and the drive-object are about as related to each other as a gas-tap and a bird's rump—"recall . . . the profoundly dissident character of the notion of drive in Freud, the disjunction of principle between the tendency, its direction, and its object, and not only its original 'perversion,' but its implication in a conceptual systematic" (Lacan 1977g, 189). However, the "conceptual systematic" by which Lacan clarifies this "dissident character of the notion of drive" is not Freudian metapsychology, but his own ever-evolving system. Instead of returning to Freud by engaging in an extended development of the fourfold schematization of *Trieb,* Lacan virtually abandons the very term itself, replacing it with a trichotomy—need, demand, and desire. This represents an effort to rethink drives from within the parameters of the Real–Symbolic–Imaginary triad.[50]

Lacan situates the concept of need under the heading of the Real.[51] A thorough exposition of need not only clarifies Lacan's positioning of the somatic within analytic theory, but also sheds further light on the nature of the Real. Thus far, the Real has been portrayed as analogous to Kant's noumenal realm—the ontological sphere of the *Ding an sich,* the level inaccessible from within the constraints of the transcendental template of subjective cognition. Lacan frequently refers to the Real as "the impossible," as "the limit of our experience." Furthermore, the Real is equated with causality qua *tuché.* Combining the motif of the "impossible-in-itself" with the idea of cause, the Real is the "lost cause"—the inaccessible origin—of the formations of the unconscious. Along these lines, Alain Badiou speaks of the Lacanian conception of the causality of the Real as involving the effect of a "self-cancellation," of a "retroactive effacement of the cause."[52] All of this is crucial to understanding the place of need within the heterogeneous organization of *Trieb.*

As is well known, Lacan stringently rejects any connection between psychoanalysis and biology, and, in particular, between drives and instincts. He tirelessly reminds his audience that analysis offers nothing to the biological sciences—"Freud is not a biologist . . . we analysts have contributed *nothing* to anything whatsoever that resembles biology" (*SXIV,* 2/22/67). In the tenth seminar, during a discussion of *Trieb,* he begins by reiterating the distinction between instinct and drive—"a drive has nothing to do with an instinct" (*SX,* 12/12/62). However, as he subsequently clarifies, a rejection of the term "instinct" doesn't entail a theoretical elimination of all somatic influences:

> If one wishes to make biological references—the references to need, of course are essential, it is not a matter of refusing them—but it is to see that the completely primitive structural difference introduces there the fact of ruptures, of cuts, introduces there immediately the signifying dialectic. Is there something here which is impenetrable to a conception that I would call everything that is most natural? The dimension of the signifier, what is it, if not, if you wish, an animal who in the hunt for his object is caught up in something such that the pursuit of this object must lead him onto another field of the trace where this pursuit itself as such no longer takes on anything but an introductory value. (*SX,* 12/12/62)

The essential thing here is to grasp that what Lacan calls "need"—the physical requirements of the individual as a living organism—indicates his preservation of a somatic level within analysis. The subject's libidinal economy is set in motion by what are, initially, bodily causes—the need for nutrition, the need to defecate, and so on.[53] But, these somatic cata-

lysts are always–already intertwined with a nonsomatic realm, namely, the realm of desire—a realm in which the objects meeting needs are far from being "natural." Lacan critiques the biologization of psychoanalysis to the extent that this would amount to subsuming human desire under the aegis of a natural telos. However, this critique is far from denying the presence of bodily influences in the libidinal life of the subject.

The intrication of the somatic and the nonsomatic is visible, in Lacan's work, as early as the introduction of the mirror stage (1936). In the article on the family complexes (1938), Lacan alludes to the mirror stage, specifying that an organic substratum may indeed lie beneath the subject's social relations:

> In opposing complex and instinct we do not deny that the complex has some biological foundation, and in defining it by certain ideal relationships we still link it to its material foundation. This foundation is the function that it fulfills in the social group; and this biological basis can be seen in the individual's vital dependence on the group. While instinct has an organic *support* and is nothing other than the regulation of this by a biological function, the complex has only occasionally an organic *relationship,* when it makes up for a biological deficiency by the regulation of a social function. (Lacan 2001a, 34–35)

The last phrase provides the link to the theory of the mirror stage ("it makes up for a biological deficiency by the regulation of a social function"). In the mirror stage, the infant is "sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence."[54] The "biological deficiency" at work in the formation of the specular ego is the anatomical, developmental fact of the infant's prolonged period of prematurational helplessness (what Freud terms "*Hilflosigkeit*"). This propels the young subject-to-be into a reliance on the protosocial bond with the (m)other, thereby heralding later intersubjective configurations. Thus, the somatic condition of the human being precipitates a series of relationships subsequently playing themselves out on a stage irreducible to this somatic origin. Lacan's 1964 conception of causality is already at work in a nascent form—Real *tuché* (that is, the infant's prematuration as a biological reality) and Imaginary–Symbolic *automaton* (the series of relationships and identifications motivated by this biological cause).

Similarly, Lacan acknowledges that *Trieb* exhibits a rapport with the vital register of human existence. He states that, "If we wished at all costs to introduce vital regulation into the function of the drive, one would certainly say that examining the source is the right way to go about it" (*SXI,* 168). In Lacanian theory, the drive-sources, as per Freud's definition of

them, are the anatomical loci distinguishing particular drives. But, just because the drives are tied to the physical contours of the body doesn't mean that the drive is therefore natural. Each drive, as a multifaceted circuit including aims and objects irreducible to the materiality of the body, must not be construed as obeying the laws of biology; the Imaginary and the Symbolic always–already mold the operation of the drive. The Lacanian conception of causality is precisely what permits positing a somatic origin of *Trieb* without allowing this origin to also become the teleological regulator of the drives (a temptation to which the later Freud arguably falls prey). Cause and effect are usually thought to exist on a single epistemological and/or ontological plane, like giving rise to like: For example, both the cause and effect involved in the collision of two billiard balls are physical phenomena involving forces specified as mass and acceleration. Similarly, biologists interpret the hunting behavior of animals as a physical effect conditioned by the physical cause of the need to eat. The *tuché–automaton* schema proposes that a cause at one (ontological) level can give rise to effects occurring at an entirely different level. Consequently, a somatic cause (the Real "lost cause" of the libidinal economy) can produce purely "mental" effects (Imaginary and Symbolic registrations of the epistemologically inaccessible Real). Lacan's particular means of isolating need in terms of drive-source thereby preserves the borderline status of *Trieb*.

Now that a general definition of Real need is in place, a more specific and familiar example might be of assistance in assessing the value of this part of Lacan's drive theory—the breast in its relation to the oral drive. The proper, natural object of need is the nutrition provided by the mother's milk; the infant's hunger demands obtaining this object. But, is it the milk that is fixated upon by the oral drive? Does the infant hallucinate milk when its needs go unsatisfied? According to Freud, the milk—that is, the natural nutritional object of the need to eat—is not cathected by the drive. Instead, the breast—the breast is, strictly speaking, incidental to the sating of hunger, since it itself isn't the material absorbed by the young organism's digestive system—serves as the libidinal focal point of the oral drive. A physical requirement results in the cathexis of an object incidental to this need. The oral drive defines pleasure not as the sating of hunger via milk, but as the sensory stimuli associated with the maternal breast (the appearance of the breast, the motor activity of sucking, and so on). This intersection between Real need and the resultant Imaginary–Symbolic object of the drive is the crossroads where soma becomes psyche, where the uniqueness of human desire first emerges.[55]

In order to rectify the mistranslation of *Trieb* by "instinct," Lacan suggests that, instead of being translated by the French *pulsion*, *Trieb*

should be rendered as "drift" (*dérive*).[56] In the case of the oral drive, the replacement of need's connection with milk (the material sating hunger) by the cathexis of the breast (the object providing pleasure) introduces the drifting that results in subsequent subliminatory substitutes far removed from the inaugural physical requirement of eating. Once weaning occurs and the breast is prohibited, specific experiential facets associated with this object—for instance, the tactile qualities of the breast or the mechanical activity of sucking—are abstracted from it and sought out in other object-choices. The unary traits permitting later entities to occupy the place of this lost maternal Thing are nothing other than these select features divorced from the primary drive-object. Although the breast is transformed into an Imaginary, specular object, the operation of abstracting traits from it in the service of sublimation is a Symbolic function: The pattern of drifting derived from this object is a metonymical process—that is, subcomponents of the initial object enable later objects to stand in for the lost whole of the initial object.[57] Lacan equates this diachronic, temporal metonymy with desire.[58]

There are numerous interpretations of Lacan's concept of desire. This particular project limits itself to highlighting two aspects of it: One, desire is a vicissitude of the drive similar to Freudian sublimation; two, desire is the outcome of the temporalization of *Trieb*. Lacan designates *objet petit a* as the cause of desire, and this object represents the loss of the quasi-noumenal *das Ding* within the defiles of a diachronous temporality. Furthermore, this absence is the outcome of phenomenal modifications of the drive-object, modifications resulting from genetic metamorphoses in the structure of the subjective framework responsible for the experiential constitution of objects. For Lacan, drive becomes desire through the loss of *das Ding*. Desire slides along the metonymically unfolding sequence of subliminatory objects, being drawn to those objects bearing the unary traits enabling them to function as *objet a*—"This dimension of loss essential to metonymy, the loss of the thing in the object, is the true sense of this thematic of the object *qua* lost and never refound, the same one which is at the basis of the Freudian discourse and is ceaselessly repeated" (*SIX*, 3/14/62).

Before proceeding to an exposé of desire, Lacan's term "demand" should be briefly discussed. This project views demand as a Symbolic–linguistic subspecies of the metonymic drifting introduced into the series of the drives' object-choices. One of Lacan's Hegelian–Kojèvian refrains is the claim that "the word murders the thing." In other words, the introduction of language, as a mediator of the subject's engagement with experiential reality, irreversibly alters the constitution of the phenomenal field (see §§31–32).[59] As noted, by unary trait, Lacan means any distin-

guishing feature of an object permitting this entity to occupy the space left vacant by the disappearance of *das Ding*. Up until now, emphasis has been placed on the sensory qualities of objects as such traits (this emphasis is meant to counterbalance overly literal, "pan-linguistic" readings of Lacan). But, in addition to these qualities, the coding of such objects by the symbolic order introduces further marks facilitating the drifting of subliminatory desire. (One of the best examples of this is Freud's case of an individual who develops a fetish for shiny noses based on the linguistic slippage permitted by the homophony between the German word "*Glanz*" [shine] and the English word "glance.")[60] Sometimes, an object is elevated into being a semblance of the Real Thing by virtue of a linguistic feature held in common between the two. Certain relations generated ex nihilo by the introduction of the signifiers of the symbolic order create associational chains along which desire displaces itself.

Symbolic demand indicates that the supposed libidinal interiority of the subject is, with the dawning of the rift separating the child's drives from their primary love-object (the mother as the Real Thing), unavoidably routed through the dynamics of language. Thereafter, the acquisition of the breast (or later substitutes for it) is contingent upon patterns of utterances, more specifically, verbal requests for this object of need and/or the satisfactions associated with it.[61] Furthermore, the naming of the objects of need enables these objects to symbolize an entire constellation of nuances. After being "murdered by the word," the breast is no longer the breast, but a representative of the mother's love: It symbolizes the desire of the Other, and the capturing of the demanded breast signifies for the infant its hold on the (m)other's desire. Whereas the objects of need are defined strictly in terms of their material capacity to gratify bodily requirements, the objects of demand are valued for what they represent beyond base physical needs.[62]

In "The Signification of the Phallus," a pseudomathematical formula is given for calculating the balance between need, demand, and desire. Desire is the remainder left by the subtraction of need from demand—"Thus desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (*Spaltung*)" (Lacan 1977h, 287). Real need propels the subject caught in the web of the symbolic order to issue a demand for an object. But, once this object is a signifying object of Symbolic demand, it carries with it residues of other (implicitly or unconsciously) symbolized wants. In particular, the young subject demands one thing—the love of the one to whom the demand is addressed. What is desired is precisely the desire of the Other.[63] The problem is that the signs of this love, unlike the material entities correspon-

ding to needs, are immaterial, ephemeral nonobjects, Lacan's key examples being the gaze and voice of the (m)other. For instance, the gaze of the mother, as an immaterial indicator of the direction of her affectionate attention, is not a thing-like entity that can be grasped and held by the child.[64] It is always liable to escape, to alight upon other focal points. This gaze, as an avatar of *objet petit a,* sustains the subject's desire insofar as the impossibility of its permanent and absolute capture as an object guarantees a perpetual drifting from one embodiment of the Other's desire to another. The Other cannot satisfy the desire behind the demand, since all that can be offered to the demanding subject are inadequate material substitutes for the gift of his/her desire itself.[65]

This relation between Symbolic demand and desire shows that Lacan doesn't limit himself to a phenomenological account of object loss—that is, the advent of the Imaginary's intervention in the experiential constitution of drive-objects—although this aspect of object *a* is indeed important. He also employs the Freudian Oedipus complex as a sociocultural crystallization of a barrier barring unmediated access to the Real Thing of the drives—as the Symbolic interdiction of *jouissance,* in addition to the Imaginary's specular interference with the Real. Lacanian desire is hence intimately related to Freud's insistence on the inevitability of "instinctual renunciation."[66]

Lacan posits a homology between "the Law" and desire. In Lacan's version of Oedipus, the Law is that whose intervention disrupts and forbids the maintenance of the symbiotic mother–child bond. Freud casts the father in this role; the father represents the fundamental prohibition against a potentially excessive and incestuous relationship. If the mother is the first object of the drives, then the father is the first aim-inhibitor, the initial embodiment of reality and its requirements. For Lacan, it isn't so much the father himself as the father's Symbolic role—that is, his position as an intrusive, legislating third party dictating the structure of the Imaginary, affective dyad operative between infantile ego and maternal alter-ego—that insists upon the abandonment of the mother qua original drive-object.[67] The biological father is not the important actor in the Oedipal drama; the Symbolic father, namely, the representative of the prohibitions to which the child must either submit or suffer psychosis (*père ou pire*), is the instigator of this complex.[68] In short, the archaic drive-object is a lost object by virtue of the paternal Law barring access to it. Given that Lacan defines desire as produced by the loss of *das Ding,* the Law is complicit in transubstantiating drive into desire.

The innovative aspect of Lacan's version of the Oedipus complex is his contention that, prior to the paternal prohibition of incest, the mother is not an object of desire per se. Although she initially satisfies the needs of

the young child, the mother doesn't serve as a focus of libidinal attachment in the same fashion as she does once Oedipal Law forbids access to her. At first, the mother merely gratifies the drives of the infant. Only with the intervention of Symbolic Law, entailing the child's surrender of its attachment to the primary love-object, is desire proper brought into existence:

> The Oedipus myth means nothing else, if not that, at the origin, desire, the desire of the father and the law are one and the same thing, and that the relationship between the law and desire is so close that nothing but the function of the law traces the path of desire, that desire, *qua* desire of the mother, *for* the mother, is identical to the function of law. (*SX*, 1/16/63)

Freud speaks of the child as having to repress a desire for its mother that preexists paternal prohibition. Lacan speculates that the child doesn't have a desire for the mother until the father (given his own desire for the child's mother) inadvertently suggests to the child, via his explicit commandments forbidding an incestuous bond, that the mother is a suitable candidate for such an excessive attachment. However, as soon as "the desire of the paternal big Other" displays its own covetousness of the maternal object and thereby installs such a desire in the child (hence Lacan's dictum that "desire is the desire of the Other"), the mother is already inaccessible to the child. Desire always arrives on the scene too late, since its emergence is conditioned by the loss of the drive-object.[69]

The Symbolic prohibition of a specified object by the big Other is a means of educating the libidinal economy of the Oedipalized subject. The drives, under the sway of need, "know" how and what to enjoy from the very start; they do not require instructions as to what objects to cathect. Desire, on the other hand, only learns what it wants when it is told what it cannot have. Stavrakakis explains:

> [D]esire for the mother, is identical to the function of the law. The same law that prohibits having her is what imposes desiring her, because in itself the mother is not such a desirable object . . . The trick of the Law is that it creates desire as a result of the lack imposed by the prohibition of incest. In that sense one can argue that it is the prohibition itself, the performative institution of symbolic Law, that makes possible the desire to 'recapture' this impossible *jouissance.* (Stavrakakis 1999, 43)

Fink provides a further concretization of this alleged implantation, achieved through the prohibition of a thus valorized object, of the Other's desire in the subject:

> In the attempt to discern their desire—which I will henceforth refer to as the Other's desire (the desire of the parental Other)—we discover that certain objects are coveted by the Other and learn to want them ourselves, modeling our desire on the Other's desire. Not only do we want the Other's desire to be directed onto us (we want to be the object, indeed the most important object, of the Other's desire); we also come to desire like the Other—we take the Other's desires as our own. (Fink 1997a, 54)

Fink continues:

> When a mother, in the presence of her young daughter, expresses admiration for a certain actor because of his cocksureness and no-nonsense approach to women (the hero in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew,* to take a concrete example), her daughter is likely to incorporate those attributes into her own image of Prince Charming . . . The Other's desire causes ours. What we sometimes consider to be most personal and intimate turns out to come from elsewhere, from some outside source. (Fink 1997a, 54–55)

The Law unwittingly but clearly expresses the covetous, jealous desire of the one who pronounces it.[70] The child, observing the prohibitory signs surrounding certain objects, forms a notion of what it too should want. This amounts to a Lacanian explanation of the origin of the "forbidden fruit" syndrome: An object only acquires an aura of desirability once its acquisition is defined as transgressive, once the enunciator of the Law expresses, whether knowingly or not, his/her own desire through the pronouncement of prohibition.

The Lacanian reinterpretation of the Oedipus complex permits outlining a provisional distinction between desire and drive. Lacan formulates it thus—"the Law is in the service of the desire that Law institutes through the prohibition of incest" (Lacan 1996, 418). An object becomes desirable by being ensconced within the prohibitory regime of the big Other. Hence, the Law of the Other inadvertently generates the desire of the subject. This asserted equivalence between Law and desire is based on the notion that desire is only possible in the wake of the archaic drive-object's withdrawal.[71] On the other hand, *Trieb* supposedly, as Jacques-Alain Miller puts it, "always has its keys in hand."[72] Consequently, in Lacanian theory, a drive is a libidinal circuit prior to the loss of its Thing. Desire is a libidinal circuit after the loss of this Thing, whether through external prohibition (the Law) or the phenomenological–structural shifts in the experiential constitution of the Thing-made-object (the *objet a* effect).

Lacan's concept of desire, which, in many ways, replaces Freud's *Trieb* in the Lacanian system, performs a profound reversal of a central theme in Freud: The libidinal life of the subject is not a consequence of a bundle of internal forces, but an outcome conditioned by an external matrix of mediation. The subject does not desire under the influence of a quasi-biological id. One cannot desire, strictly speaking, until an outside third party (for example, the Symbolic father) raises a barrier to one's means of enjoyment—"The desire of the Other is not a path of access to the desire of the subject—it's the very space of desire itself" (*SV,* 402). Desire is shaped within the space of a topological continuum between *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt.*

Discussing the Lacanian reinterpretation of Freudian drive theory, Žižek compares Lacan's "spatialization" of the drive with Einstein's reconception of gravity. Einstein rejects the notion that gravity is simply a force distorting space, arguing instead that gravity is itself the very distortion of space. Analogously, Lacan rejects the Freudian theme of desire as an internal, subjective force distorting the external, objective order of the space of social reality. Desire, as the desire of the Other, takes on its shape in being coextensive with an external order:

> What Lacan did with the notion of drive is strangely similar to what Einstein, in his general theory of relativity, did with the notion of gravity. Einstein 'desubstantialized' gravity by reducing it to geometry: gravity is not a substantial force which 'bends' space but the name for the curvature of space itself; in an analogous way, Lacan 'desubstantialized' drives: a drive is not a primordial positive force but a purely geometrical, topological phenomenon, the name for the curvature of the space of desire—for the paradox that, within this space, the way to attain the object (*a*) is not to go straight for it (the surest way to miss it) but to encircle it, to 'go round in circles.' Drive is this purely topological 'distortion' of the natural instinct which finds satisfaction in a direct consumption of its object. (Žižek 1996b, 173–174)

To the extent that Lacan's coupling of desire with the interdiction of drive complexifies Freud's assumption about the relative separability of *Innenwelt* (the id, the primary processes, the pleasure principle, and so on) from *Umwelt* (external reality in all its various aspects as bearing upon the psychical apparatus), Žižek's analogy is extremely helpful in grasping the revolutionary aspect of the Lacanian recasting of *Trieb.* However, to invoke Kant once more, what about the other pure form of intuition besides space, namely, what about time? Does the Lacanian spatialization of drive also entail a correlative warping of temporality?

Returning to the topic of need, Lacan differentiates between the natural cycle of instinctual requirements and the unnatural reiteration of the somatic compulsions of *Trieb.* Instinctual behaviors are always triggered at an appropriate time: When the organism's metabolism requires nutrition, patterns of action aimed at the acquisition of food are activated; when the environment presents the organism with a dangerous, threatening situation, a flight reaction is set in motion. By contrast, the bodily Real agitating the libidinal economy of the subject completely ignores the suitability of context. Drives are temporally out of synch with the natural order—"The constancy of the thrust forbids any assimilation of the drive to a biological function, which always has a rhythm. The first thing Freud says about the drive is . . . that it has no day or night, no spring or autumn, no rise and fall. It is a constant force" (*SXI,* 165). Lacan situates the temporal constancy of drive at the level of drive-pressure (*Drang*), failing to mention the other three metapsychological components of *Trieb.* Is the entirety of the drive's structure capable of characterization by the motif of constancy?

In the eleventh seminar, the drive-source (*Quelle*) is clearly defined as the anatomical origin of the drive-pressure—in particular, the rim-like orifices of the body generate the somatic "energy" fueling the initial momentum of the drives.[73] Thus, source and pressure form a complementary pair. The source issues forth a pressure (what Lacan calls a "thrust") obeying an unnatural and insistent compulsion. What about the drive's aims and objects? Are they also regulated by the recurrence of the drive-source's pressure? Lacanian theory forcefully asserts that such is not the case—"Now let us ask ourselves what appears first when we look more closely at the four terms laid down by Freud in relation to the drive. Let us say that these four terms cannot but appear disjointed" (*SXI,* 163).

Taking into account the emphasis on the constancy of the drive-source's pressure, the incompatibility of the four components of *Trieb* indicates that the aims and objects of the drives are not regulated by a repetitious (a)temporality. Object *a* is a condensed point of temporal conflict between repetition (the synchronic return of the past) and difference (the diachronic modification effectuated by the perpetual recontextualization of the repeated past) subsisting within the object-pole of drive. But, this leaves some unanswered questions about why the past compulsively resurfaces within later periods. Why is there always something in the object more than the object itself, exhibiting a coherent constancy throughout a series of otherwise disparate object-choices? Lacan's handling of the Freudian *Trieb* is much more careful in the eleventh seminar than elsewhere. In this text, he tacitly acknowledges that the recurrence of the Real Thing behind Imaginary and Symbolic façades occurs at the behest of

what is here identified as the axis of iteration. Lacan seemingly uses the concept of need to encompass the functions of both source and pressure.

How are demand and desire temporally structured, being distinct from need? Although numerous shifts mark the evolution of his thought over a period of almost fifty years, Lacan remains steadfast in his pursuit of a "genetic logic." Éric Laurent alludes to a connection between Lacan's work on *Trieb* and his investigations into logical time:

> [T]he constitution of the subject . . . is linked with the drives or instincts and cannot be separated therefrom . . . Lacan tries to show that . . . what Freud presents, using energy metaphors derived from nineteenth century mechanics, has to be revised from a formal twentieth century standpoint. That standpoint, far from instituting a logic that excludes time, includes a temporal function. Yet there is always a problem introducing time into a formal logical system. Hegel tried to establish a logic that could include time, but his views were widely repudiated by formal logic. What Lacan tries to establish is precisely that, from his standpoint, distinct from Hegel's, a temporal function can be introduced within the 'logification' of operations constituting the subject. (Laurent 1995, 20–21)

Both the subject and object of Lacanian theory are each split along a line of division between noumenal atemporality and phenomenal temporalization. Furthermore, the emergence of *objet petit a* occurs in tandem with the genetic metamorphoses constituting the framework of subjective structure. Temporality certainly must be important to the Lacanian conception of *Trieb*. But, Laurent doesn't say in detail exactly how this is the case.

Lacan describes the drift of the drive (the desire resulting from demand) as a diachronic, metonymic sliding along an unfolding chain of associated elements. As diachronous, this movement of desire involves a temporal dimension not present within the working of the drive's source and pressure. What's more, the Symbolic's participation in inducing the drifting of desire from object to object (the mediation of need by demand) means that the Lacanian signifier, bringing with it its own form of temporality, is at play here. In the subject's libidinal economy, the *point de capiton* effect induces a retroactive modification of the past-to-be-repeated with the addition of successive links in the chain of object-choices:

> Indestructible desire models the present on the image of the past. This thing whose drone we hear as something which we attribute right away

> to the effects of repetition or of deferred action, is perhaps not certain if we look very closely at it, namely that if the indestructible desire is now modeled on the image of the past, it is perhaps like the donkey's carrot, it is always ahead of the subject, always producing retroactively the same effects. (*SVI,* 12/10/58)

Based on the claim that the aims and objects of *Trieb* are signifier-like ideational representations—Freud's *Vorstellungen* mutually codetermining each other as part of a differential unconscious system[74]—Lacan maintains that the sequence of object-choices is better viewed "as a temporal sequence than as a spatial sequence" (*SVI,* 12/3/58). In this light, the above quotation is an explanation of why desire, which is defined as existing to the extent that it doesn't have its Thing—it pursues object *a* as the embodiment of a constitutive lack—is indestructible. The structural impossibility of repeating the past without modifying it by the very fact of repetition guarantees that the terminal point of desire's metonymic sliding is always yet-to-come. In other words, the perpetually attempted repetition of past object "x" generates the open ended, differential set "$x^1$," "$x^2$," "$x^3$," and so on. And, each successive "x" (each signifier-like *Vorstellung*) retroactively alters the unconscious status of the prior series of "x"s (the past object-choices as the past-to-be-repeated).[75] The "donkey's carrot" of desire is the fantasmatic possibility of capturing the mythicized *das Ding* of an always-past Real through the mediation of a future object *à venir.*

Lacanian theory thus sets the stage for a complete reassessment of the drives in terms of temporality. In stressing the disjointed, montage-like nature of *Trieb,* Lacan hints at the possibility of internalizing Freud's pervasive, omnipresent conflict motif within the metapsychological structure of all drives, instead of resorting either to permutations of the dual drive model or to variations on the theme of id-against-reality. Although he heavily favors the spatial metaphors of topology in outlining the relationship between subjectivity and the drives, Lacan's return to Freud creates the potential for a temporal analysis of *Trieb,* one based on the idea that *Trieb* is split between a repetitious constancy and a fluctuating oscillation.

A temporal theory of drive would also rectify certain subtle inconsistencies in Lacan's conceptual edifice. Lacan critiques Freudian energetics as being a fictitious, pseudoscientific quantification of the libidinal economy. The myth of a vital force permits the fabrication of specious psychoanalytic explanations based on appeals to biological factors, affectivity, and so on. In Lacan's view, if the unconscious is indeed what Freud says it is—the unconscious doesn't consist of affects or energies, but of re-

pressed drive representatives—then the thematic predominance of energetics threatens to obscure the true structure of the unconscious. The condition under which Lacan grants both libidinal energy and affectivity a place in metapsychology is that these operate, at most, as presupposed variables—as nothing more than hypothesized constants permitting the theoretical work of analytic interpretation.[76] Similarly, *à la* Real need qua a bodily *tuché* setting the drives in motion, Lacan admits the importance of Freud's somatic side of *Trieb* only as a "lost cause." For the subject of analysis as well as for the observing analyst, needs are never encountered in naked form; the body is part of the "*an sich*" inaccessibility of the Real (what Lacan calls "the limit of our experience"). In the Lacanian Real–Symbolic–Imaginary schema, somatic requirements are always–already submerged in phenomenological and structural matrices. Analysis never gets its hands on the substance of raw flesh, a flesh untainted by Imaginary and Symbolic mediation.

Despite the convincing nature of his account of embodiment in psychoanalytic metapsychology, Lacan risks overstepping his own rules in apparently speculating that the substantial substratum of a bodily Real underlies the subject's libidinal economy (speculations that become more and more frequent in his later seminars). For all his warnings that analysts never handle "the clay of instinct," Lacan doesn't shy away from theoretically handling a somatic, causal origin of *Trieb*. Does he avoid this risk by relegating the body to the Real? Kant, for instance, gets caught between an ontologization of the noumenal subject as a *Ding an sich* beyond the limits of possible experience and a de-ontologization of this same subject considered as a regulative idea of reason with no constitutive function. Likewise, Lacan's maintenance of a bodily Real *an sich* potentially veers into an erroneous constitution of an ineffable yet existent substratum. What would a regulative, corrective counterbalancing of this risk look like?

The central feature of the Kantian subject as a regulative psychological idea of reason is that one cannot help but conceive of oneself as an atemporal self-sameness, a substance devoid of empirical attributes that remains the same in all possible phenomenal contextualizations. The psychoanalytic theory of drive involves a similar conceptual compulsion: Under the presupposition of the unconscious, the analyst cannot help but conceive of a repetitious constancy—Real need, the pressure of the drive-source, *substance jouissante,* and so on—that insistently returns in multiple subsequent contexts. Much of psychoanalytic theory and practice is licensed by this regulative idea. If the "substantial" dimension of *Trieb* is truly restricted from playing a constitutive role in strictly psychoanalytic deployments of metapsychological concepts, then treating the constancy

of drive as a quasi-somatic phenomenon is tantamount to overstepping the limits of possible psychoanalytic experience. (Whether philosophical appropriations of psychoanalytic metapsychology or the life sciences can posit such energies or substances is another matter altogether.) And yet, the dilemma is that the liquidation of the somatic from psychoanalysis both defies the letter of the Freudian text as well as raises the specter of a solipsism in which the Imaginary and the Symbolic alone totally determine human reality.

A means of negotiating the problem is to admit the third dimension of the Real strictly as it functions in its regulative capacity, namely, as a necessarily presupposed constancy, as a cyclical (a)temporality—the sole function that Freud's references to psychical energy fulfill is, ultimately, to sustain the notion of invariant constants connecting the past and the present. The question of whether or not this constancy is the product of a bodily cause must be put aside, especially since Lacan's own theoretical architectonic forbids a biological hypostatization of Freudian metapsychology in relation to analytic interpretive practice proper. The salient features of the Freudian–Lacanian *Trieb* reveal themselves through a focus on the intractable conflict between the repetitious (a)temporality of the axis of iteration and the bidirectional, dialectical temporality of the axis of alteration.

8

# The Barred *Trieb*

## §24 The Centrality of Freud's 1915 Metapsychological Schematization of Drive

Within its very foundations, psychoanalysis is plagued by an unresolved antinomy. While advancing a model of the psyche in which a linear determinism serves as the basis for interpretation—a chronological, developmental model, in which the past shapes the present—analysis simultaneously posits the activity of a retroactive constructivism. The latter notion entails that, from within the context of the present, the traces of earlier experiences are subjected to revisions and alterations; the fixed past presumed by linear determinism is not such an immutable base as might initially be supposed. This *après-coup* effect is far from being a marginal or passing problem in Freud's oeuvre. It lies at the center of his metapsychological edifice, creating conceptual difficulties at a variety of different points.

In the 1899 essay "Screen Memories," written during the period in which psychoanalysis begins to take shape, Freud already vacillates on the issue of the facticity of memories qua retained traces of the past. He goes so far there as to speculate that individuals might not have any memories "from" their early years, but only recollections "relating to" their childhood. Freud is led to this speculation by the hypothesis that, instead of the past subsisting in unaltered form in the psyche and thereby overdetermining later psychical states, the present plays an active role in "retranscribing" traces of the past. (As early as Freud's "Letter 52" to Fliess [December 6th, 1896], he discusses the rearrangement of mnemic traces over time.)[1] Memories from the past indelibly bear the embellishments of the very act of their present recollection, thus compromising the ability to

treat them as unsullied representations or transparent windows offering a view back into prior history. Freud does not want to surrender the crucial assumption (crucial for linear determinism) that the unconscious faithfully retains elements of the past. But, the presence of an agency of alteration in the psyche—as is well known, this phenomenon of retroactive alteration (*Nachträglichkeit* as deferred action) is visible as early as the 1894 *Studies on Hysteria*—lures Freud onto shaky ground, a ground that he never quite manages to stabilize to his intellectual satisfaction.

Later, in the case of the Wolf Man ("From the History of an Infantile Neurosis," published in 1918), Freud exhibits an uncertainty similar to the one he expresses apropos the topic of screen memories. The unconscious nucleus around which the Wolf Man's neurosis is constructed is the "fundamental fantasy" of the "primal scene"—an unconscious scenario in which the Wolf Man, as an infant, is in his parents' room while they are copulating. The scene involves various elements, each of which recurs in the adult individual's symptoms (the "V" symbol, the window frame, and so on). Under the linear determinism paradigm of analytic temporality, this fantasy is a residue, a retained impression of an actual event from the Wolf Man's early childhood. He repressed the factual memory of his parents engaging in intercourse.

But, due to prior experiences with analysands, Freud is hesitant to declare that the revelation of the primal scene is tantamount to an uncovering of the actual past. In a footnote to the earlier case study of the Rat Man ("Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," published in 1909), he remarks that childhood memories are fully formed as memories only in later life:

> If we do not wish to go astray in our judgement of their historical reality, we must above all bear in mind that people's 'childhood memories' are only consolidated at a later period, usually at the age of puberty; and that this involves a complicated process of remodeling, analogous in every way to the process by which a nation constructs legends about its early history. (*SE* 10: 206)

This is basically a reiteration of the screen memory thesis. The quotation marks around "childhood memories" hint at Freud's contention that all such mnemic materials are, at best, retroactively distorted residues of a past that cannot be recovered in a state untouched by this distortion.

Freud's attempted compromise between linear determinism and retroactive constructivism begins to take shape in 1917 (although this compromise resonates with the 1894 theory of hysterical traumas *à la* deferred action). In his "General Theory of the Neuroses," Freud speaks of

the primal scene as a brute factual occurrence that the child initially, when experiencing it, doesn't comprehend. But, once the child subsequently acquires a greater understanding of sexuality, the scene is grasped after the fact:

> [I]t is perfectly possible for a child, while he is not yet credited with possessing an understanding or a memory, to be a witness of the sexual act between his parents or other grown-up people; and the possibility cannot be rejected that he will be able to understand and react to the impression *in retrospect.* (*SE* 16: 369)

An implicit distinction is advanced in this passage: A difference exists between a perceptual mnemic trace (an impression originally inscribed in the psyche via the perception-consciousness system) and the significance assigned to this same trace (the retroactive "comprehension" of the inscription after its registration). Freud thus provides himself with a means of salvaging the essential assumption of linear determinism, namely, that the core of the unconscious consists of repressed traces of factual occurrences. In other words, he is able, through this distinction between the mnemic trace and the act of comprehending said trace, to localize the distortion characteristic of screen memories to the deferred understanding of the perceptually registered event. The reality of the remembered event itself remains intact—in other words, Freud can continue adhering to his historical realism.

However, in his 1918 discussion of the Wolf Man's case, Freud doesn't exploit this distinction between "fact" and "recollection." Instead, he sidesteps the entire issue by claiming that the relative reality of the primal scene is irrelevant. Even more surprising is that, almost out of nowhere, he employs the dubious notion of phylogenetic heritage:

> I should myself be glad to know whether the primal scene in my present patient's case was a phantasy or a real experience; but, taking other similar cases into account, I must admit that the answer to this question is not in fact a matter of very great importance. These scenes of observing parental intercourse, of being seduced in childhood, and of being threatened with castration are unquestionably an inherited endowment, a phylogenetic heritage, but they may just as easily be acquired by personal experience. (*SE* 17: 97)

This passage is best interpreted as a last ditch effort to preserve the straightforward realist conception of the past assumed by the linear determinism model of psychoanalytic interpretation. The analyst can con-

ceive of the primal scene in either one of two ways: Either the primal scene is the memory of a real experience, or this scene is a fantasy concocted in later life and projected back into childhood. According to Freud, this choice is not "a matter of very great importance."[2] What is important to notice is that even in the second case—that is, the primal scene as a fantasy construction, a screen of sorts—the primal scene ultimately refers back to a factual state of affairs having occurred in historical reality. Behind Freud's assertion in the quotation above that phylogenetic materials serve as the building blocks of fantasies—that is, when real experience doesn't provide the child with evidence of such things as parental coitus, adult seductions, or castration threats, a reservoir of collective experience (the "phylogenetic heritage") fills-in the "gaps" left by ontogenetic history—is the contention that phylogenetic memory represents each individual's access to genuine events in the (pre)history of humanity.[3] Consequently, even in possible instances when the primal scene could be clearly regarded as a primal fantasy, this illusion nonetheless preserves within itself a hard kernel of actual past reality.

Without the recourse to phylogenetic memory as the factual reservoir of ontogenetic fantasy, Freud is left, after the case of the Wolf Man, with the possibility that the nuclei of unconscious formations are not actual events/experiences having occurred in "objective reality." In his abandonment of the seduction theory, the early Freud is relatively comfortable with accepting that many "remembered" childhood seduction scenes are fantasmatic fabrications, wish fulfillments of Oedipally inspired desires. As for the status of the fundamental fantasy, allegedly being based on the truth of the primal scene, Freud is somewhat more hesitant to jettison the connection to reality. But, how can one discern the difference between fantasy and reality based on the evidence of an analysand's recollections? If certain mnemic traces in the unconscious bear witness to past experiences, just how much distortion can these traces undergo before they cross over into being fantasmatic fictions? The 1937 paper "Constructions in Analysis" is Freud's final attempt to grapple with such questions.

"Constructions in Analysis" invokes the now familiar comparison between the psychoanalyst and the archaeologist.[4] In this analogy, Freud speaks of the associative material divulged by the analysand as akin to the incomplete fragments of objects typically handled by the archaeologist. Just as archaeological objects are often incomplete remainders from the past whose significance must be surmised by conjecture, inference, and speculation, so too are the monologues of analysands excerpts from a partially destroyed text. (In 1953, Lacan describes the unconscious as a blank page or missing chapter of a supposedly complete volume.)[5] Freud also

identifies a difficulty shared between archaeology and psychoanalysis. Both fields face the problem of determining the relative age of given fragmentary objects:

> Both of them, moreover, are subject to many of the same difficulties and sources of error. One of the most ticklish problems that confronts the archaeologist is notoriously the determination of the relative age of his finds; and if an object makes its appearance in some particular level, it often remains to be decided whether it belongs to that level or whether it was carried down to that level owing to some subsequent disturbance. It is easy to imagine the corresponding doubts that arise in the case of analytic constructions. (*SE* 23: 259)

Freud's virtual obsession with the matter of accurately pinpointing the actual dates of his patients' recollections persists in this late paper. The doubts he refers to here are uncertainties as to whether a particular piece of analytic data is a genuine remnant from childhood experience, or, rather, a retroactively projected fantasy from later life. The chronological period of origin for unconscious formations is still of primary importance to Freud, despite earlier theoretical advances such as his abandonment of the first seduction theory as well as his (feigned) indifference to the facticity of the Wolf Man's fundamental fantasy.

However, Freud's comparison of analytic constructions with the historical detective work of archaeology breaks down as soon as he further specifies what is meant by a "construction" (as opposed to an "interpretation"). In the case of an interpretation, the analyst eventually produces a recollection on the part of the analysand; the patient can finally remember an event from the past that was previously subjected to the ego's repressive censorship. In the case of a construction, the analysand is unable to recall the occurrence hypothesized by the analyst as underlying a series of associated elements. The patient cannot remember if this speculative scene actually transpired or not in the past of his/her personal history. The distinction between these two productions of the analyst can be expressed in Kantian terms: In an interpretation, the concept of the analyst (the idea of a primal repressed nucleus at the terminal point of origin for a sequence of symptoms, as a hypothesis dictated by metapsychological reason) finds its complement in an intuition of the analysand (the consciously relived event from prior experience); in a construction, the concept of the analyst remains suspended as an empty regulative idea, since no complementary intuition arises on the side of the analysand. In comparing analysis with archaeology, Freud assumes that the analyst, like the archaeologist, has at least some minimal fragments of evidence to work with

(namely, partial intuitions produced by the analysand). Perhaps this holds true for analytic interpretation. But, when it comes to constructions, the analyst is much closer to being a transcendental philosopher than an empirical historical investigator.

Just as in the case of the Wolf Man, Freud dodges the potential problem posed to his linear determinism by the enigmatic status of analytic constructions. In the 1937 paper, he avoids, via two separate moves, directly renouncing the assumption that the past unidirectionally overdetermines the present. First, he tacitly maintains the factual accuracy of constructions by appealing to the effects that they produce—although a construction may never find verification at the level of the analysand's conscious recollections, its "truth" is testified to by the dissolution of the patient's symptoms (the specious claim that empirical efficacy is, by itself, sufficient proof).[6] The therapeutic effects on the patient in the present time of the analysis replace the truth criterion used in interpretations, namely, a revivification of the past at the level of conscious experience. (In other words, regardless of Freud's protests to the contrary, a construction has much less of a right to claim a connection with the reality of the past than an interpretation.) Second, despite the admitted fact that a construction receives confirmation solely by its current effects on a symptom, Freud clings to the notion that an embedded historical reality subsists within the panorama of the analysand's pathological features.[7] Although this reality is inaccessible insofar as the patient cannot recall it, Freud implies that a therapeutically successful construction can be assumed, as Lacan might say, to "hit the bull's eye of the Real."

Jacques-Alain Miller contends that Freud's introduction of the concept of construction entails ramifications not only for the therapeutic practice of analysis, but for the actual status of the unconscious itself. In the first seminar, Lacan justifies the legitimacy of Freudian constructions by downplaying the importance of the analysand's ability to recollectively re-present past lived experiences—"the fact that the subject relives, comes to remember, in the intuitive sense of the word, the formative events of his existence, is not in itself so very important. What matters is what he reconstructs of it" (*SI,* 13). For Lacan, whether or not the conscious ego of the patient grasps the construction as its "own" does not matter, since the unconscious is, in its essence, foreign to the ego anyway.[8] In fact, Lacan insinuates that the fundamental inability of the analysand's consciousness to intuitively subjectivize the construction offered by the analyst gives the construction a value exceeding a mere interpretation (in which the analysand finally corroborates the analyst's remarks): What is revealed by the construction is truly unconscious—or, is the "primal repressed"—namely, utterly incapable of being accepted by the ego.

Following Lacan, Miller distinguishes between "memory" and "knowledge." In Freudian terms, memory is that which is repressed insofar as it can potentially be interpreted and, thereby, explicitly brought into the field of the analysand's conscious awareness. In other words, memories are the match established between the analyst's conceptual interpretation and the analysand's intuited recollection. Knowledge refers to another type of repressed unconscious formation, one that is inherently inaccessible to the consciousness of the analysand. Discussing "Constructions in Analysis," Miller states:

> [F]or Freud the elaboration of knowledge should occur on the analysand's side in the form of recollection. And in this text he finds himself with something different—that in fact the analyst has not lived this and by an operation of construction, of deduction, even guessing—he uses this word on one occasion—he extracts the consequences and can provide the part that is lacking. The part that is no longer memory is pure knowledge, unlived.
>
> Freud discovers this and it is like the limit of his conception of the unconscious, because for him the unconscious was the repressed, that is, that experienced by the subject in his first years and then forgotten. With this it is found that knowledge, not lived, but rather logically deduced, can be equivalent to the part lacking, the part repressed from what is remembered . . . this posterior investigation is what Lacan has done: divorcing knowledge from memory. (Miller 1995, 21)

Miller continues:

> Freud discovered the unconscious as a kind of memory of a lived experience, but in this text he established that what cannot be recuperated by memory can, mysteriously, have an equivalent in the analyst's knowledge, and that the analyst's knowledge can complete the memories of the analysand.
>
> From this point we see that in the unconscious we are dealing less with the recollections of the memory of a lived experience than with knowledge. The very substance of the unconscious of the analysand is made of the same fabric as the analyst's elaborations. (Miller 1995, 29)

Both Lacan and Miller extend Freud's thought past the point where Freud himself is willing to take it. They transform what is presented in 1937 as an outer limit of analytic praxis (on the side of the analyst) into a metapsychological characterization of the unconscious in and of itself (on the side

of the analysand). In arguing that the "very substance of the unconscious of the analysand is made of the same fabric as the analyst's elaborations," Miller embraces consequences that Freud would almost certainly hesitate to affirm. To begin with, this means that "the unconscious" isn't a discrete entity on the side of either the analyst or the analysand. Instead, the unconscious would be closer to a transindividual discursive network governed by the principles of analytic theory. The Symbolic unconscious, or the unconscious as the "discourse of the Other," are Lacanian commonplaces, and Miller uses Freudian constructions to reinforce these theses by making the analyst's knowledge equivalent to the analysand's unconscious.[9]

The more radical consequence of the Lacanian–Millerian reading of "Constructions in Analysis" bears on the balance in psychoanalytic theory between Freud's two temporal paradigms (linear determinism and retroactive constructivism). If anything, Miller's willingness to equate the analyst's constructions with the analysand's unconscious—Miller performs this equation regardless of whether the analysand provides any memory–intuition from the past to corroborate the construction—indicates a rather decisive break with the traditional Freudian orientation around uncovering the actual, factual past. With constructions, even on Freud's own admission, the analyst is never certain if the hypothetical scene/event really did occur in the patient's prior personal history. The justification that the analyst has for believing in the truth of the construction is that analytic theory dictates presupposing the intact unity of something archaic beneath the manifest, fragmentary associations of the patient; the construction is "true" because it fills in the central gaps in the analytic material under consideration. Hence, the truth-value of the reconstructed unconscious resides not in a realist correspondence to past states of affairs, but in the "as if" regulative unity presupposed by the metapsychological framework as applied to the present discursive field of the ongoing analysis—the interests of psychoanalytic reason demand constructions when interpretations fail. Miller accepts this implication when he notes that the work of Freudian (re)construction is licensed by "the hypothesis that the entire psychic object remains," that the unconscious proper is itself this hypothesis.[10]

Why must the reconstructive work of the analyst proceed without any substantialization vis-à-vis recollective confirmation? What is responsible for detaining certain analytic insights in the limbo of an "as if" status? Interestingly enough, in "Constructions in Analysis," Freud never states what mechanism in the analysand's psyche is responsible for hindering the (re)appearance of a memory–intuition corresponding to the analyst's construction–concept. It cannot simply be common repression,

since repression is routinely overcome through successful interpretations. Perhaps the answer involves the possibility that the "reality" posited by the construction was never actually experienced (at least consciously) by the analysand. This would suggest a mechanism beyond regular repression—perhaps what Lacan touches upon with his theory of foreclosure.

Freud provides a potential answer to the question of what lies beyond repression in the 1914 piece "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through." He states that, "There is one special class of experiences of the utmost importance for which no memory can as a rule be recovered" (*SE* 12: 149). This is the key to figuring out the 1937 enigma as to why constructions are unable to locate a form of mnemic confirmation on the side of the patient's psyche. The "one special class of experiences" is the class of those occurrences that are only understood/comprehended by the psyche after the fact, namely, materials subjected to deferred action:

> These are experiences which occurred in very early childhood and were not understood at the time but which were *subsequently* understood and interpreted. One gains a knowledge of them through dreams and one is obliged to believe in them on the most compelling evidence provided by the fabric of the neurosis. Moreover, we can ascertain for ourselves that the patient, after his resistances have been overcome, no longer invokes the absence of any memory of them (any sense of familiarity with them) as a ground for refusing to accept them. This matter, however, calls for so much critical caution and introduces so much that is novel and startling that I shall reserve it for a separate discussion in connection with suitable material. (*SE* 12: 149)

The ability for the retroactive *après-coup* subsequently to prohibit recollective access to the past is "startling" to Freud to the extent that it conflicts with the alleged timelessness of the unconscious qua reservoir of censored past experiences. In interpretation, repression is overcome, and the patient is finally able to relive and abreact certain fragments of his/her long ignored personal history. This indicates that the unconscious, like an indelible recording surface, preserves prior events that can potentially be recovered by consciousness once the ego's interference is lessened. And yet, assuming that "Constructions in Analysis" is indeed the "separate discussion" promised by Freud in the 1914 quotation above, deferred action, forever after its advent, blocks potential conscious access to a past that is permanently obliterated from the analysand's psyche. That is to say, one can assume that the retroactively altered past is no longer repressed in the usual sense of the term, since it can't be interpretively recovered but only "reconstructed." This retroactive constructivism challenges the suppos-

edly atemporal nature of the unconscious: The *après-coup* effect demonstrates that subsequent vicissitudes of psychical experience and/or structure can actually expel traces of the past. The remaining holes in the fabric of first-person memory can only be patched over by the analyst's third-person "as if" constructions, namely, by metapsychological reason's speculative work in the here-and-now of the analytic dialogue. Problematically, Freud never accepts this consequence for his realist linear determinism. He never bothers to directly address the recurrent antinomy between his two temporal paradigms.

Freudian drive theory is plagued by a similar difficulty stemming from the same theoretical root—the metapsychological neglect of the need for an adequate theory of temporality in psychoanalysis. In 1905, Freud places emphasis on the developmental, teleological nature of the libidinal economy. Earlier drive phases are replaced by later drive phases; the genital drive eventually succeeds, in "normal" cases, in displacing and subduing the oral and anal drives (that is, the partial drives). In 1920, the new drive theory of the second topography reverses this evolutionary picture. *Trieb* is intrinsically regressive, and any "development" of the libidinal economy is a superficial metamorphosis governed by a single, permanent fixation, namely, the goal of returning to the tension-free state of inorganicity. The theme of the *Todestrieb* portrays all drives as essentially regressive (as opposed to teleological–developmental). Two mutually exclusive temporal schemas collide, and Freud leaves it unclear as to whether or how the forward-looking trajectory of his early version of *Trieb* is to be reconciled with the nostalgic, regressively oriented tendencies of his later version.

In this light, the 1905 drive theory participates in the retroactive constructivism paradigm: The later appearance of genital sexuality modifies the earlier configurations of the libidinal economy—the past is reshaped by subsequent states of affairs. Correspondingly, the 1920 theory evidently reinforces the linear determinism of the atemporal unconscious: No matter what vicissitudes the drives undergo in the subject's lived history, a forever-past, archaic constant (as the orientation around the calm inertness preceding the emergence of life) permanently dominates the libidinal economy. Is it possible to rectify the tensions plaguing Freud's various postulates without oversimplifying the idea of drive?

The notion of tension is, in fact, crucial to any version of *Trieb*. The task here isn't so much to rectify the discrepancies between Freud's drive theories as to adequately situate them in such a fashion that their loci and dynamic of interaction are properly understood. In the early Freud, the drives represent the *Innenwelt* of a desirous unconscious ruled by the pleasure principle; this inner mechanism is placed in conflict with external

reality. In the later Freud, the drives are not only at odds with reality, but are divided into two antagonistic factions perpetually warring with each other. In a certain sense, one could speak of the drives as the embodiment of an irreconcilable imbalance between the pleasure and reality principles. Sometimes, drives overwhelm the reality principle, refusing to take into account the real context in which they operate—drives are "too much" pleasure. At other times, reality harshly disrupts the drives, providing them with no outlet for discharge—drives are "too little" pleasure. In this interpretation, drives always reflect the relative imbalance between these principles. *Trieb* is thus the index of a permanent struggle.[11] In other words, drives simultaneously involve an excess of enjoyment (that is, sublimation inevitably succeeds in overcoming the obstacles of reality) and a deficit of enjoyment (instinctual renunciation, as the loss of the archaic drive-object, is the inevitable price to be paid for a social subjectivization inherent to human nature).

Up until now, attention has been devoted to the two extreme ends of Freud's drive theory—the 1905 and 1920 theories. The key to properly situating the differences in temporal structure between these two models lies in reading the 1915 "Drives and Their Vicissitudes" as a textual vanishing mediator lying at the intersection of the first and second topographies. Without such a mediator, one is left with a seriously problematic antinomy: On the one hand, the drives are shaped according to the telos of a developmental progression; on the other hand, the drives remain fundamentally unaffected by chronological changes in the evolution of the libidinal economy. The remaining task of this project is not to eliminate this antinomic tension. In fact, the antagonisms between the various versions of Freudian drive theory aren't contradictions within the fabric of his discursive descriptions of the external, extradiscursive reality of drive. *These contradictions are part and parcel of the internally conflictual nature of* Trieb *itself.* Consequently, it is of paramount importance not to hastily eliminate this apparent impasse by favoring one pole of the opposition over the other through asserting that drive is either temporally developmental or atemporally conservative. Instead, one must show how *Trieb* exists as the tension between temporal movement and timeless stasis, this tension being the motor force behind the perpetual, ceaseless activities of the drives.

The primary difficulty that makes the 1905 and 1920 drive theories appear at odds is that, in both accounts, Freud fails to employ the distinctions that are so crucial to his 1915 metapsychological account of *Trieb.* Of course, the early work of the *Three Essays* should not itself be faulted, since its insights are vital precursors of the later 1915 model. But, from 1920 onwards, Freud neither seems to notice certain discrepancies between the drive

theory of the second topography and that of the first, nor does he try to reconcile the revisions stemming from the *Todestrieb* with the first topography. Through recourse to the distinctions between source, pressure, aim, and object, it can easily and elegantly be explained how *Trieb* is simultaneously temporal and timeless, as well as how the drives oscillate between both the "too much" of sublimation and the "not enough" of instinctual renunciation. Furthermore, in positing a *split drive* on the basis of a constitutive antagonism between its component parts—the axis of iteration (source and pressure) versus the axis of alteration (aim and object), with this move requiring the 1915 metapsychology—one can analyze *Trieb* "beyond the pleasure principle" without incurring the absurd implications stemming from certain aspects of the death drive.

Before exploring the details of the conflictual structure of the split drive, a cautionary clarification is in order. The antagonism between the two axes inherent to all drives is not an opposition capable of eventual resolution through anything like the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, the acceptance of the reality principle, or adjustments of the social prohibitions governing the libidinal lives of individuals. The subject never successfully negotiates a harmonization between the drive axes. This conflict is itself the very essence of drive, and an elision of this conflict entails either a return to animal instinct or the complete sacrifice/neglect of the libidinal dimension of human subjects in favor of the "legality" of the social order. Reducing drive to the quasi-somatic, energetic aspect of its source and pressure—drive as an economic force operative in the *Innenwelt* of the id—amounts to reinstinctualizing *Trieb;* aim-inhibition, object-loss, and the vicissitudes resulting therefrom are crucial features distinguishing human drives from animal instincts. Similarly, ignoring the quasi-somatic aspect of drives by situating *Trieb* solely within a mediating representational order, as the "mental" side of drive spoken of by Freud or the "signifying" unconscious of Lacan, risks a collapse into psychical and/or social constructivist solipsism.

Thus far, Kant has been the primary philosophical resource employed here in the reevaluation of psychoanalytic metapsychology. However, at this present juncture, Hegelian thought is more appropriate for adequately grasping the status of the conflict between the drive axes. The Freudian *Trieb* exhibits an antinomic tension between a developmental telos versus a regressive nostalgia. For Kant, an antinomy is a contradiction between two notions, both of which are equally justified on the part of rational thought. Each of the two opposed positions can be legitimately grounded by logical argumentation. Kant concludes from this that the antinomies demonstrate one of the fundamental axioms of the critical philosophy, namely, that human cognition is divorced from the noumenal

realm of *das Ding an sich*. In other words, an antinomy represents an impasse in thought only. Kant therefore assumes that things-in-themselves cannot contain any deadlocks or antagonisms; such "flaws" result from the inadequacies of human cognition alone. Since Kant presumptively posits that external, ontological reality must be homogeneously consistent with itself, intractable contradictions, when encountered, must be attributed solely to the mind, that is, exclusively to subjectivity's epistemological framework.

Hegel draws exactly the opposite conclusion from Kant apropos rationality's antinomic features. Instead of contradiction being relegated to a cognitive order kept separate from the world of "real things," Hegel argues that the unsurpassable nature of the conflicts represented in the antinomies is an accurate reflection of the actual world itself. "Things-in-themselves" are not homogenous, self-consistent entities untouched by the strife of human intellect, but exist, in themselves, as antagonistic, self-sundered things:

> In the attempt which reason makes to comprehend the unconditioned nature of the World, it falls into what are called Antinomies. In other words it maintains two opposite propositions about the same object, and in such a way that each of them has to be maintained with equal necessity. From this it follows that the body of cosmical fact, the specific statements descriptive of which run into contradiction, cannot be a self-subsistent reality, but only an appearance. The explanation offered by Kant alleges that the contradiction does not affect the object in its own proper essence, but attaches only to the Reason which seeks to comprehend it. (Hegel 1975, 76–77 [§48])

Hegel continues:

> But here too Kant, as we must add, never got beyond the negative result that the thing-in-itself is unknowable, and never penetrated to the discovery of what the antinomies really and positively mean. That true and positive meaning of the antinomies is this: that every actual thing involves a coexistence of opposed elements. Consequently to know, or, in other words, to comprehend an object is equivalent to being conscious of it as a concrete unity of opposed determinations. (Hegel 1975, 78 [§48])

What relevance could this possibly have for a discussion of Freud? The essential point is this: The unthematized antinomies arising from Freud's various presentations of drive theory are not mere contradictions within

the conceptual-discursive fabric of psychoanalytic reason, but are reflective of the primordial antagonism of *Trieb an sich.* The time has come to dispense with the earlier strategic employment of the Kantian critical apparatus; the time has come to ontologize the theoretical results obtained through this process. As such, the crucial task that remains is to elucidate the anatomy of the dynamic arising from the conflict internal to the split drive, a conflict inhering within each and every drive insofar as it is a drive per se. There is no primordial state in which *Trieb* was once a unified, coordinated, and harmonious mechanism that, by unhappy chance, subsequently falls victim to a series of contingent vicissitudes throwing it off its original balance. Drive is nothing other than an intrinsic dysfunctionality, a perpetual margin of dissatisfaction, generated by an irresolvable difference between the axis of iteration's repetitious (a)temporality and the axis of alteration's dialectical temporality. Put differently, *Trieb* "exists" only as a point of failed synthesis, a locus of permanent incompatibility.[12]

## §25 Source–Pressure and Aim–Object: The Two Drive Axes

The two drive axes are conflictual poles internal to the very structure of drive, that is, they are part of the basic metapsychological definition of drive. Freud formulates his evolving system through the delineation of various binary oppositions. He tends to use dualisms in forging concepts.[13] Furthermore, the problem of explaining unpleasure (whether as suffering, dissatisfaction, or self-destruction) is, of course, the difficulty that prompts Freud's shift from the first to the second topography. In "Mourning and Melancholia," situated just prior to the second topography, Freud struggles to explain a virulent form of pathological suffering while still clinging to the alleged primacy of the pleasure principle.[14] Eventually, in the face of the traumatic neuroses, Freud finally surrenders his long-standing loyalty to the pleasure principle.

The second topography employs two sets of dichotomies in order to situate the drives within a system no longer governed by the pleasure principle alone: the unifying life drives of *Eros* versus the destructiveness of the death drives, and the *Innenwelt* of the desirous id versus the *Umwelt* of a reality fundamentally at odds with the id's goal of securing satisfaction. These two dichotomies are meant to illustrate the logic of human dissatisfaction. On the one hand, within the psyche, a war rages between two separate categories of drives. *Eros* manifests itself as the erotic drives, seeking to perpetuate life through sexual activity; the *Todestrieb,* although

"silent" (the death drives have no voice of their own, revealing themselves only through the alloys/admixtures they form with the libido), seeks to shorten life in the ongoing effort to regress back into an inorganic state devoid of all tension. Humans experience displeasure when the *Todestrieb* gains the upper hand in the balance between itself and *Eros*. This "victory" appears in the form of neurotic symptoms, self-destructive behavior, violent aggression, unwanted compulsions, and resistance to the analytic cure.

Apart from the internal strife between the two types of drives, Freud also posits a basic incompatibility between the drives and the external world. The central thesis of *Civilization and Its Discontents* is that "reality"—whether as the physical limits of the individual's body, the threatening powers of the forces of nature, or the prohibitions of the social milieu[15]—inevitably forces a compromise in which the drives are submitted to a higher authority than the pleasure principle alone. After accepting the supremacy of the reality principle, the pleasure principle becomes a mechanism that takes into account the potential gains (the securing of pleasurable gratifications) and losses (the incurring of unpleasure) resulting from given courses of action. Under the thus modified pleasure principle, the ego negotiates between the demands of the id qua "seat of the drives" and the constraints of the external world. In this account, drives have clearly been transformed from their earlier borderline status (as per "Drives and Their Vicissitudes") into internal economic forces. Drives are here treated as demands issuing from the depths of an isolated, animalistic id, with the liminal layer of the ego implicitly sustaining a straightforward "inner psyche" versus "outer environment" distinction.

Both the *Eros–Todestrieb* and *Innenwelt–Umwelt* dichotomies entail numerous problems for Freud's metapsychology. In the first case, Freud formulates two separate categories of drives in order to explain the failings of the pleasure principle. In the second case, Freud explains the same thing through recourse to an opposition between drives and "the real world." The one move that he doesn't make, which the 1915 model prepares the way for, is to situate a conflict not between two drive types or between psyche and reality, but within the heart of *Trieb*'s own structure. By splitting the drive, one is able to shed light on what lies beyond the pleasure principle without succumbing either to the contradictions of the death drive or the reinstinctualization of drives via a questionable nature–culture distinction.

How can the split drive be better specified? What are some tangible differences between this portrayal of *Trieb* and other versions within analytic theory? A familiar point of departure for a more detailed explanation of this model is the theme of object loss in psychoanalysis. The imbalance

between the two drive axes can generally be stated as follows: With the axis of alteration (aim and object), something must be lost, namely, the initial object-choice inaugurating the emergence of the drive; with the axis of iteration (source and pressure), something cannot be lost, that is, the inescapable demand for a recovery of the necessarily lost initial object-choice. Lacanian theory provides two reasons for the inevitability of object loss at the level of the axis of alteration. First, the genetic nature of the psychoanalytic subject correspondingly entails a metamorphosis in the phenomenological constitution of drive-objects—the *objet petit a* effect. The "same" entity—for example, the maternal breast—through the lens of the shifting subjective framework affecting the experiential constitution of such entities, is cleaved into the inaccessible Real Thing and the concatenation of Imaginary–Symbolic objects. *Das Ding* becomes irrecoverable through this process. Second, apart from the loss represented by object *a,* "the Law"—whether as the Oedipal, paternal prohibition of incest or the basic renunciations imposed by the sociosymbolic order—also guarantees that the archaic drive-object must be abandoned. As should be clear, both types of loss bear upon the aims and objects of *Trieb:* Object *a* is a loss of the drive-object, and the Law is a metaphor for aim-inhibition.

The split defining the fundamental antagonism of *Trieb* resides in the fact that the source and pressure of drives refuse to notice or accept the loss inevitably occurring within the axis of alteration. Throughout his work, from the 1890s onward, Freud speaks of "internal stimuli" from which the psyche cannot flee. In the 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology,* Freud states:

> The principle of inertia is, however, broken through from the first owing to another circumstance. With an [increasing] complexity of the interior [of the organism], the nervous system receives stimuli from the somatic element itself—endogenous stimuli—which have equally to be discharged. These have their origin in the cells of the body and give rise to the major needs: hunger, respiration, sexuality. From these the organism cannot withdraw as it does from external stimuli; it cannot employ their *Q* for flight from the stimulus. (*SE* 1: 296–297)

Freud later identifies the drives as the primary generators of internal excitations.[16] Of course, given the contingency and malleability of aims and objects (stipulated as early as the *Three Essays*), the axis of alteration cannot be conflated with these quasi-somatic stimuli. For Freud, objects are extrinsic supports for the drive, while aims are trajectories influenced by the external constraints of reality. Freud is not specific enough when he

identifies drives as inner forces impinging upon the rest of the psychical apparatus. It isn't *Trieb* as a whole that behaves as a constant economic force producing insistent stimuli prompting "action" on the part of the individual—one particular dimension of the drive (and not drive as a totality) functions in this manner, namely, the axis of iteration. Furthermore, what the source and pressure of drives insist upon is the repetition of an earlier form of enjoyment, a recovery of the primordial drive-object (the Lacanian *das Ding*). The self-defeating essence of the drive is the consequence of understanding *Trieb* as a juxtaposition of these two axes wherein the initial drive-object is inevitably lost, and yet, at one and the same time, an impossible demand is made to recover the necessarily lost object. Drives are a paradoxical coupling of "something must be lost" with "something cannot be lost." The axis of iteration's futile but inescapable insistence on an "eternal return of the same satisfaction" forcefully ignores the modifications effectuated in and through the axis of alteration.

The distinction between the drive axes can be understood even better through an examination of the Lacanian distinction between pleasure and *jouissance*. Based on Freud's own characterizations of it, the pleasure principle, once placed in relation to the reality principle, acts like an economic speculator, assessing potential gains and losses of satisfaction in light of the possible outcomes of various courses of action. It seeks to maximize satisfaction and correspondingly minimize pain/dissatisfaction. In Freud's account, the pleasure principle qua economic speculator isn't so much a function of the primary processes within the id, but the strategy wherein the ego negotiates with the exigencies of reality on behalf of the id (with the ego often performing this function unconsciously).[17] For Lacan, the ego feels pain (in the form of anxiety, symptoms, and so on) when the homeostatic balance established by the pleasure principle is thrown into disorder by an insistent enjoyment than takes no account whatsoever of the speculative gains or losses of a diluted, sublimated pleasure.[18] *Jouissance* is beyond the pleasure principle precisely to the extent that it breaks off negotiations with the reality principle, that it bypasses the (unconscious) moderating, mitigating influence of the ego on the drives.[19]

Lacan's primary example of the difference between the pleasure principle and *jouissance* is borrowed from Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. In demonstrating the ethical autonomy of the noumenal subject in relation to the "pathological inclinations" (wishes, desires, and so on) of the phenomenal portion of the self, Kant speaks of a scenario in which a man is offered a chance to have sexual intercourse with the woman of his dreams. The catch is that, after fornicating in conformity with his carnal inclinations, this man will be hanged. In Kant's view, a man faced with this

choice between, on the one hand, sex followed by the gallows, and, on the other hand, controlling his desires and not facing execution will obviously choose the latter option.[20] Although not an ethical act in the strict Kantian sense—the man bases his decision on the future empirical consequences of his choice—the ability of the human individual to transcend his/her sensuous nature, particularly in the face of adverse outcomes, is supposedly quite apparent in this example.

For Lacan, the subduing of the lust of the Kantian sensualist is effectuated under the aegis of the pleasure principle. This individual speculates that the net balance of pleasure will be negative if the short-term gratification of the sexual urge is paid for by the somewhat longer-term consequence of death. But, Lacan asks, do individuals always decide in favor of restrained abstinence as Kant alleges? If anything is evident from Freud's reevaluation of symptoms and suffering in the second topography, it is that individuals routinely opt for choices that do not accord with the balancing act of the pleasure principle. Neurotics frequently "choose" to repeat painful experiences at the behest of that aspect of *Trieb* unreasonably disregarding empirical circumstances, that is, repetition compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*):

> Suppose, says Kant, that in order to control the excesses of a sensualist, one produces the following situation. There is in a bedroom the woman he currently lusts after. He is granted the freedom to enter that room to satisfy his desire or his need, but next to the door through which he will leave there stands the gallows on which he will be hanged . . . As far as Kant is concerned, it goes without saying that the gallows will be a sufficient deterrent; there's no question of an individual going to screw a woman when he knows he's to be hanged on the way out . . . (*SVII,* 108)

Lacan continues:

> The striking point is that the power of proof is here left to reality—to the real behavior of the individual, I mean. It is in the real that Kant asks us to examine the impact of the weight of reality, which he identifies here with the weight of duty. (*SVII,* 108)

Lacan proceeds to formulate two connected criticisms of Kant's example. First, there is no logical and/or transcendental necessity for the man to forfeit sleeping with the woman in order to avoid execution. It is entirely within the realm of possibility that an individual could accept sacrificing his/her life for a night of fabulous sex—"it is not impossible for a man to sleep with a woman knowing full well that he is to be bumped off on his

way out, by the gallows or anything else . . . it is not impossible that this man coolly accepts such an eventuality on his leaving" (*SVII,* 109). Second, according to Lacan, psychoanalysis contradicts Kant's assumption about the obvious nature of the choice between the woman and the gallows—this being an empirical, anthropological–psychological assumption on Kant's part. If the woman in the bedroom is the overvalued object of a "pathological" subject, perhaps the threat of execution is insufficient to deter him from surrendering to his desires.[21] Or, even better, what about the neurotic who can only enjoy sex if there is an immediate, significant threat attached to the act? Žižek explains:

> Lacan's counter-argument here is that we certainly *do* have to guess what his answer may be: what if we encounter a subject (as we do regularly in psychoanalysis) who can only enjoy a night of passion fully if some form of 'gallows' *is* threatening him—that is, if, by doing it, he is violating some prohibition? . . . if gratifying sexual passion involves the suspension of even the most elementary 'egoistic' interests . . . this gratification is clearly located 'beyond the pleasure principle'. . . (Žižek 1999f, 289)

In Lacan's perspective on Kant's example, two choices have an equal logical possibility for the man standing before both the gallows and the bedroom door. The choice not to gratify one's lust is dictated by the pleasure principle, given its role in negotiating between the impulses of the id and the series of trade-offs in reality (the well-being of the ego is taken into account by the economic speculations of the pleasure principle). The ego experiences pain precisely when the orderly cost-benefit homeostasis of the pleasure principle is abandoned. This pain is what happens in the instance when the individual, for whatever reason, chooses to copulate in the face of imminent death (no doubt, when the noose is fitted around his neck, the ego of the subject will experience a mild degree of anxiety).[22] *Jouissance* is this living out of the drives in utter disregard of the pleasure principle's utilitarian-style consequentialism.

In Lacanian theory, both pleasure and *jouissance* can be defined by reference to the relationship between drive and ego. Pleasure results from a diluted discharge of libidinal tension occurring under the mitigating influence of the conflict between the pleasure and reality principles; the ego experiences pleasure by modifying the drives in a subliminatory fashion, thereby diminishing the "intensity" of *Trieb.* A precondition for pleasure is, in this view, the ego's taming of the drives, and this task of taming by the ego is the primary function of the pleasure principle once it is placed in a rapport with the reality principle. Hence, Lacan implicitly con-

tends that Freud's "constancy principle"—the regulation of "tension," "intensity," and "excitation" by the psyche, in short, its maintenance of a homeostatic balance—is itself a further specification of the notion of pleasure as conceived within a metapsychological framework. By contrast, *jouissance* results from *Trieb* circumventing or overriding the mitigating, homeostatic constancy imposed by the pleasure principle and its ego-servant.[23] *Jouissance* is, in effect, the intensity of a drive once it becomes capable of short circuiting the normal governing dynamic between pleasure and reality, once *Trieb* is powerful enough to compel acts without regard for the contentment, satisfaction, or even basic safety of the ego and/or body of the individual.[24] In the sixteenth seminar, Lacan states—"The pleasure principle is this barrier to *jouissance* and nothing else" (*SXVI,* 4/23/69). Less than a year later, in the seventeenth seminar, he reiterates this definition almost verbatim—"what the pleasure principle maintains is the limit as regards *jouissance*" (*SXVII,* 51). Jacques-Alain Miller provides a concise articulation of this Lacanian distinction—"*jouissance* in itself is a certain destruction, and precisely in this it differs from the pleasure principle, in its sense of a certain moderation and a certain well-being. The very name *jouissance* fundamentally translates what resists the pleasure principle's moderation" (Miller 1992b, 26).

The imbalance between the drive axes is homologous to the rift separating the pleasure principle and *jouissance.* One should also remember, at this juncture, that the Freudian death drive is illustrative of the splitting of *Trieb:* One, the *Todestrieb* is a general, metapsychological description of all drives; two, the *Todestrieb* aims at achieving a complete elimination of tension; three, all drives are generators of internal tension—therefore, *Trieb* is inherently self-defeating, since it aims at eliminating tension while, at one and the same time, being itself responsible for generating tension. Lacan compares *jouissance* to the death drive. In this comparison, a similar internal hindrance as in the case of the *Todestrieb* becomes visible:

> What makes repetition necessary is enjoyment . . . It is in so far as there is a seeking for enjoyment *qua* repetition, that there is produced something which is in operation in the step taken by this Freudian breakthrough. What interests us in terms of repetition, and what is going to be inscribed in a dialectic of enjoyment, is properly speaking what goes against life. It is at the level of repetition that Freud finds himself constrained in a way, and this by the very structure of discourse, to articulate the death instinct. A hyperbole, a fabulous and in truth scandalous extrapolation for anyone who might take literally the identification of the unconscious and instinct. Which means that repetition is not simply

> the function of the cycles that life comprises, cycles of need and of satisfaction, but of something different, a cycle that involves the disappearance of this life as such, and is a return to the inanimate. A point on the horizon, an ideal point, a point that goes beyond the frame, but whose sense is indicated by a structural analysis, it is perfectly well indicated by what is involved in enjoyment. (*SXVII,* 51)

To begin with, Lacan clarifies that the "inanimate state" referred to so literally by Freud as the point of cathexis for the death drive—death as the explicit aim and/or object of the *Todestrieb*—is not actually present as an element in the unconscious. Instead, as a "point on the horizon" or an "ideal point," Lacan's interpretation of Freud treats the absolute zero of inorganicity as a metaphor for the structurally implied trajectory of a drive that operates beyond the constraints of the pleasure principle.[25] For Lacan, *Todestrieb* and/or *jouissance* are not literal fixations upon death per se, but the insistent demand for an absolute enjoyment, a demand without consideration for the welfare of either the ego or the physical organism housing these drives. The *jouissance* of the *Todestrieb* is, in fact, an ignorance of death, a neglect of the consequences factoring into the calculations of the pleasure principle. However, the key to understanding the relationship between Lacanian *jouissance* and the split drive lies in the notion of repetition. Lacan portrays repetition as a "return of *jouissance.*"[26] What, in Lacan's view, is responsible for repetition? What sustains the "eternal return" of *jouissance*?

Thus far, in part due to Lacan's own pronouncements on the topic, *jouissance* appears to be a mode of pure enjoyment, an absolute pleasure undiluted by the subliminatory compromises struck by the pleasure principle with the reality principle. *Jouissance* is the "Real Thing," an ecstatic release without hindrance. Lacan frequently relates *jouissance* to the Real; as such, one must keep in mind the Hegelian aspect of the Real (especially as explained in Žižek's work on this Lacanian concept). Although it might seem that the pleasure principle avoids *das Ding* and settles for substitutive objects while *jouissance* unreservedly seizes *das Ding,* such is not the case. As with desire, the refrain of *jouissance* is "*ce n'est pas ça*":

> 'That's not it' is the very cry by which the jouissance obtained is distinguished from the jouissance expected . . .
>
> Structure, which connects up here, demonstrates nothing if not that it is of the same text as jouissance, insofar as, in marking by what distance jouissance misses—the jouissance that would be in question if 'that were it'—structure does not presuppose merely the jouissance that would be it, it also props up another. (*SXX,* 111–112)

The "*jouissance* expected" is an illusory, mythicized "full satisfaction," namely, the re-finding of *das Ding*. (In the parlance of this project, it would be a successful response by the axis of alteration to the impossible demand of the axis of iteration for a recurrence of an inaugural form of satisfaction.) But, phenomenological–Imaginary and structural–Symbolic factors thwart the very possibility of this anticipated enjoyment. What the subject always gets (the "*jouissance* obtained") is, at best, a pleasure that falls short of the idealized standard. Even worse, in most cases, *jouissance* manifests itself as a "pleasure-in-pain"—as with Freud's position that the ego experiences the "success" of repressed drives as pain (that is, as disavowed pleasure), the Lacanian ego too cannot fully enjoy *jouissance*. Furthermore, if the gap were ever to be closed between expected and obtained *jouissance,* the repeated resurgence of *jouissance* would cease. (This *ce n'est pas ça* is, in actuality, required for repetition.) Full satisfaction implies a kind of psychical death, an evacuation of the tension of dissatisfaction that perpetually drives the libidinal economy.

One consequently arrives at a paradoxical point in Lacanian theory: *Jouissance* is an enjoyment that is enjoyable only insofar as it doesn't get what it is ostensibly after.[27] How does this interpretation of Lacan affect what has been said thus far? What about Kant's example of the man choosing between sexual abstinence and execution? Kant takes it for granted that no man will choose the woman given the threat of death by hanging. Lacan, on the other hand, contends that some subjects not only would consider trading their lives for a night of sex with the "lady of their dreams," but that this very threat of death can serve as a requisite precondition for sexual enjoyment—for example, a man who is impotent unless something like the shadow of a gallows is cast over the bed. However, it would be interesting to go even further and imagine the man who accepts the exchange of death-for-sex caught in the midst of the long awaited sexual intercourse for which he sacrificed himself. (In both Kant and Lacan's descriptions of the example, the woman whom the man is offered is someone he has already lusted over—that is, the man has expected/anticipated sex with her.) What happens if, while actually engaged in fornication, the man experiences one of those moments when sex is no longer sexy, so to speak? What occurs when the seductive aura of his object of desire, an aura sustained in part by the previous inaccessibility of the woman, dissipates in the close proximity of the sexual act? The man might not only find that this sexual encounter is not as good as he imagined it would be when fantasizing about this particular woman (the *jouissance* expected is not the *jouissance* obtained), but that the sexual act itself is transformed from a titillating fantasy into a disgusting, mechanical activity—two sweating, grunting heaps of flesh rubbing against each other and secreting fluids.[28]

In this case, especially since this activity is what he exchanged his life for, the hedonistic sensualist would almost certainly be crushed by a mixture of revulsion and horror. He lived out his drive, only to find that even transcending the sober calculations of the pleasure principle does not provide a pure "enjoyment in the Real." This man would be traumatized by the fact that the expected *jouissance* for which he traded his life (the most intensely pleasurable sex with the woman of his fantasies) is transubstantiated into the ugliness of an obtained *jouissance,* namely, the encounter with a repulsive Real, in which the arousing image of the woman seen at a distance becomes, when approached too close, a mere pound of flesh not worth dying for in the end. As Žižek frequently notes, the Real—more specifically here, *das Ding* as the apparent goal of *Trieb*—only appears desirable when coated by a thin layer of fantasizing, by a veil woven of Imaginary and Symbolic threads.[29] Once *das Ding* is placed behind the cloth of this screen, any subsequent lifting of the veil reveals not the expected sublime Thing nostalgically prized by the drives, but, as Lacan puts it, an ugly "gift of shit."[30] Or, even better is Lacan's example of the voyeur who fantasizes about a beautiful girl whose shadow he can see moving about on the other side of a drawn curtain. As long as the curtain is situated between the gaze of the voyeur and the real person behind the curtain, exciting fantasies can be spun around the shadow—"What the voyeur is looking for and finds is merely a shadow, a shadow behind the curtain. There he will phantasize any magic of presence, the most graceful of girls, for example, even if on the other side there is only a hairy athlete" (*SXI,* 182). The Real is the "hairy athlete" revealed by the raising of the Imaginary–Symbolic curtain sustaining the reality of desire. In the *Écrits,* Lacan speaks of the fantasmatic shadow of the Real object as a "lure," a false point of anticipated full *jouissance* that, due to its fundamental inaccessibility, sustains the dissatisfaction that itself is the motor of the drives.[31] And, in the seminars, he frequently describes the structure of fantasy as a "screen" or "frame": The Real Thing framed or screened by fantasy is *objet petit a,* whereas *das Ding,* hidden behind the veil of fantasies, is the traumatic, horrible Thing, a subjectively inassimilable extimacy.[32]

Taking into account these characterizations of both *jouissance* and pleasure, Kant's example of the man faced with the decision between preserving his life or indulging in sex is a paradigmatic instance of a Lacanian "forced choice." In the eleventh seminar, Lacan refers to the phrase uttered by street muggers: "Your money or your life!" This "offer," while grammatically appearing to be a choice (given the disjunctive "or") is actually no choice: If one chooses life, one loses money; if one chooses money, one loses both life and money. Either way, one is about to be parted from one's cash—"*Your money or your life!* If I choose the money, I

lose both. If I choose life, I have life without the money, namely, a life deprived of something" (*SXI,* 212). The Kantian offer, proposed to the hypothetical sensualist, is quite similar: "Your *jouissance* or your life!" If the sensualist chooses life, he loses *jouissance* by not getting to sleep with the woman of his dreams. But—here's the twist—if this man chooses to (attempt to) obtain *jouissance,* then he loses both his life, since he will be hanged, and his (expected) *jouissance.* In other words, when he actually does get to fornicate with the woman after having accepted the offer of sex for life, he is horrified to realize that *ce n'est pas ça:* "This isn't what I traded my life for! Why was I willing to die for this fleeting, transitory, animalistic gratification?" After his "*petite mort*" comes the literal "*grande Mort.*" In the (temporal) space between these two deaths, the sensualist learns all too late that the Kantian offer is indeed a deceptive forced choice—"Castration means that *jouissance* must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder (*l'échelle renversée*) of the Law of desire" (Lacan 1977i, 324). If the sensualist refuses "castration" by not surrendering his *jouissance,* then he loses both life and *jouissance.*

The forced choice between *jouissance* and "life"—as the moderate, homeostatic balance of a pleasure principle rendering itself compatible with the restrictions suggested to it by the reality principle—demonstrates the inherent impossibility of the individual ever achieving a full satisfaction of his/her drives. Perhaps drives could be described as embodied manifestations of a libidinal forced choice. And, as posited, this impossibility is the result of an irreducible incompatibility between the two temporal dimensions of *Trieb:* An axis of iteration, in which an unrealizable demand for a pure repetition of an always–already absent form of enjoyment is endlessly reiterated, versus an axis of alteration, from which the "thing" demanded is necessarily excluded. Juan-David Nasio's description of *jouissance* enables a comparison to be drawn between the libidinal economy and temporality:

> [P]leasure is quite transitory while *jouissance* is so radically permanent that it becomes atemporal. Pleasure passes and disappears while *jouissance* is a tension that belongs to life itself. As long as there is *jouissance* there is life, because *jouissance* is none other than the force that insures repetition, the ineluctable succession of vital events. If I had to establish a connection between the Lacanian concept of *jouissance* and the Freudian concept of repetition, I would conclude by identifying *jouissance* with what Freud called 'repetition compulsion.' If there is a Freudian concept that is similar to *jouissance*—conceived of as a force that insures repetition—it is certainly that of repetition compulsion, understood as the irreducible human tendency to live no doubt toward the future, but to

> do so by trying to complete the acts begun in the past. The entire force of life lies in this movement. (Nasio 1998, 40–41)

Pleasure is fleeting and transitory, whereas *jouissance* is permanently repetitive. Moreover, sublimation is the pleasure principle's primary means of negotiating between the id and reality. In sublimation, the pleasure principle, once under the sway of the reality principle, evaluates the ego's immediate circumstances, selecting a substitutive object within a status quo context. This object is chosen because it isn't "dangerous" in terms of being prohibited by external reality. Hence, even if one grants to Freud that the unconscious and/or id are ignorant of time, the pleasure principle itself certainly cannot be accused of such ignorance. This principle's main task is to strike a balance between the demands of *Trieb*—the axis of iteration pays no attention to the realistic appropriateness of present situations when insisting on its *jouissance*—and the field of potentially attainable objects (that is, nonprohibited substitutes for the lost Thing) in the present context of the subject's existence. The pleasure principle has, at a minimum, a general sense of the shifting circumstances of the here-and-now. *Jouissance,* on the other hand, is atemporal—or, cyclically temporal, in the sense of a constant, regular recurrence—to the extent that it acts as an "idiotic," acephalous iteration of an unreasonable, impossible demand.

## §26 A Discontent Prior to Civilization

The advantage of a temporal approach to *Trieb* is that it avoids the temptation of decisively isolating one of the two borderline aspects of the drives, thereby reducing them to either a somatic material or a sociolinguistic substance. Freud's language often veers in the direction of a mythology in which a sexual fluid (that is, libido) condenses and diffuses itself throughout both body and psyche. On the other hand, many Lacanians speak as though drives are simply introjected "signifiers of the big Other." Viewing the intrinsic failure of *Trieb* as a consequence of a dehiscence between two temporal orders provides analytic metapsychology with a third descriptive language, a theoretical approach that neither describes the drives in purely somatic nor entirely ideational terms. This temporal portrayal respects and leaves intact the borderline status of *Trieb.*

Nowhere is the risk of substantializing the drives as pre-social, untamed urges greater than in Freud's theory of culture from the second to-

pography. The very concept of instinctual renunciation insinuates that drives, prior to the intervention of civilization (as the restrictive reality of social life), subsist in an unfettered state of nonrepressed activity. But, some of Freud's earlier analyses indict this assumption that drives exist prior to the mitigation of their enjoyment via outside powers. In particular, the *Three Essays* claims that the drive-object is always–already a lost object; and, if part of the definition of drive includes the category of object (as of 1915), then a drive exists strictly as that which has lost its original object-choice. This points to the paradox of instinctual renunciation: *Prior to renunciation, there is no drive to renounce.* There is no "pure drive" behind the drive bereft of its Real Thing, and no "direct drive" prior to the derailed, sublimated drive. In this fashion, the concept of the drive functions like the Lacanian Real. Once the individual is caught in the prohibitory (Symbolic) matrix of sociocultural reality, it appears as if there were drives operating in an uninhibited manner before the individual's entrance into this reality—drives are "presupposed" by the Symbolic, surmised to reside in an untainted archaic anteriority. But, the truth that this presupposition conceals is that drives are actually "posed" by the Symbolic. In other words, the nonrepressed, fully satisfied *Trieb,* a drive preexisting civilization's constraints, is a retroactively projected illusion. This fantasy serves to conceal one thing: Drives are constitutively dysfunctional and, even if left to their own devices—if the repressive regime of civilization were ever to be lifted—could not achieve their "expected *jouissance.*" This *jouissance* is an illusory lure, a *trompe-l'oeil* that is convincing only insofar as social reality remains in place as the seemingly contingent scapegoat blamed for barring access to enjoyment.

In this light, the Freud who flirts with placing the blame for libidinal dissatisfaction squarely on the shoulders of the reality of civilization behaves, in part, like the Hegelian beautiful soul. In his 1951 paper "Some Reflections on the Ego," Lacan describes how what appears as external reality is intrinsically shaped by the internal organization of the subject—"while reality precedes thought, it takes different forms according to the way the subject deals with it" (Lacan 1953, 11). He proceeds to draw the parallel with Hegel—"the usual idealistic protest against the chaos of the world only betrays, inversely, the very way in which he who has a part to play in it manages to survive. This is just the illusion which Hegel denounced as the Law of the Heart" (Lacan 1953, 12). One cannot help but see this Hegelian logic reduplicated in the Freudian theory of culture: If only outside factors were not opposed to it, *Trieb* would be perfectly functional. Now, this isn't to say that the various hindrances identified by Freud don't exist. But, using these barriers as a screen behind which one presupposes an ideal, purified *Trieb* is to place metapsychological theory in

the service of wishful thinking. Behind the veil of contingent external impediments circumscribing the libidinal economies of subjects lies a *Trieb* containing its own internal limitations, its own self-hindrances.

The clearest example of psychoanalytic theory sustaining the fantasy of a libidinal paradise is the standard Marxist appropriation of Freud. Some analytic theorists are liable to perceive Freudo-Marxism as a deviation from or falsification of psychoanalysis. The specificity of the Freudian clinic is sacrificed to the interests of a political, ideological project, and Freud is horribly distorted in the process. Is Freudo-Marxism really a perversion of Freud's thought? Or, does it not represent a logical extension of the second topography (in particular, the development of certain theses in *Civilization and Its Discontents*)? Marcuse, whose *Eros and Civilization* is a key manifesto of Freudo-Marxism, counters Freud's marked pessimism about the progress of civilization with a messianic prediction of a possible "libidinal liberation" through changes in political and economic structures. For Marcuse, the severity of the renunciations imposed by social reality is relative to the comparative scarcity or abundance of goods meeting the needs of individuals. (Right from the start, Marcuse betrays a basic confusion about the difference between needs and drives.) If the artificial scarcities and superfluous consumer wants sustained by capitalism are eliminated by a new distribution of resources and a rejection of consumerism, then, correspondingly, repression can be lessened or abolished since renunciation is no longer necessary to the same extent.[33] Unlike Freud, Marcuse believes that specific ideological changes can actualize a social order in which instinctual renunciation is a thing of the past—"Under optimum conditions, the prevalence, in mature civilization, of material and intellectual wealth would be such as to allow painless gratification of needs, while domination would no longer systematically forestall such gratification" (Marcuse 1955, 139). Marcuse is convinced that the suppressive nature of civilization is not an inherent feature of it. He sees repression and renunciation as historical contingencies that capitalist ideology portrays as necessary so as to hide and/or rationalize its unnecessary, gratuitous injustices.[34]

At first glance, the contrast between Freud and Marcuse is clear. The former denies the possibility of overcoming the need for instinctual renunciation; such renunciation is a precondition for living under a social rule of law. The latter views civilizational repression as a historical contingency; its apparent necessity is an ideological notion, a means of justifying social inequality and cultivating its acceptance by individuals. But, doesn't Freud believe in the possibility of lifting repression? Isn't the analytic cure the means of liberating consciously denied drives? Žižek remarks that the

Frankfurt School reception of Freud highlights a tension within psychoanalysis on this issue:

> There is thus a radical and constitutive *indecision* which pertains to the fundamental intention of psychoanalytic theory and practice: it is split between the 'liberating' gesture of setting free repressed libidinal potential and the 'resigned conservatism' of accepting repression as the necessary price for the progress of civilization. (Žižek 1994, 12)

One could dismiss this "indecision" as a pseudoproblem easily reconciled by the assertion that the curing of individuals amounts to a lessening of acute forms of idiosyncratically pathological repressions. At the same time, a psychoanalytic overview of human groups recognizes that a minimal level of shared sociocultural neurosis—macro-level "symptoms" like religion—is endemic to civilization itself. This would likely be Freud's response. But, what if Freud's "resigned conservatism" is itself a ruse? What if, despite all appearances, Freud's apparent pessimism conceals an underlying affinity with the utopian sentiments of Freudo-Marxism?

Freud's dark resignation in his later works is a cynical façade, regardless of whether or not he himself is consciously aware of this. In *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Freud defines instinctual renunciation, and, in so doing, indicates that the individual prior to civilization enjoyed a sort of libidinal liberty:

> This replacement of the power of the individual by the power of a community constitutes the decisive step of civilization. The essence of it lies in the fact that the members of the community restrict themselves in their possibilities of satisfaction, whereas the individual knew no such restrictions . . .
>
> The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization. It was greatest before there was any civilization . . . The development of civilization imposes restrictions on it, and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions. What makes itself felt in a human community as a desire for freedom may prove favourable to a further development of civilization; it may remain compatible with civilization. But it may also spring from the remains of their original personality, which is still untamed by civilization and may thus become the basis in them of hostility to civilization. (*SE* 21: 95–96)

A genuine irony is at work here. Without much (if any) concrete historical data, Freud speaks about an archaic period during which individuals

did not have to restrict their drives in accordance with norms governing human social collectivities. The "development of civilization" therefore represents the long march begun with the exile from a presocial state of libidinal freedom. Earlier in the same text (in the very same chapter of *Civilization and Its Discontents*), Freud describes how a Eurocentric vision of the lives of other "primitive" cultures (as displayed by the myth of the "noble savage") generates hostility to civilization based on a misguided fetishization of these foreigners' ways of life as libidinally uninhibited:

> How has it happened that so many people have come to take up this strange attitude of hostility to civilization? I believe that the basis of it was a deep and long-standing dissatisfaction with the then existing state of civilization and that on that basis a condemnation of it was built up, occasioned by certain specific historical events . . . The last but one of these occasions was when the progress of voyages of discovery led to contact with primitive peoples and races. In consequence of insufficient observation and a mistaken view of their manners and customs, they appeared to Europeans to be leading a simple, happy life with few wants, a life such as was unattainable by their visitors with their superior civilization. (*SE* 21: 87)

Freud, unlike the European voyagers who based their romanticization of a precivilizational state on some minimal elements of misguided observation, has no evidence whatsoever that there ever existed a state of affairs in which individuals didn't have to submit to some form of binding group order. Beneath the surface of its pessimistic proclamations, *Civilization and Its Discontents* harbors exactly the same fantasies as sustained by the fetishization of "exotic" cultures: A libidinal Eden does exist, even if it is now lost and inaccessible. Additionally, as inaccessible, the hypothetical existence of an uninhibited *Trieb* cannot be falsified—certain specious theoretical defense mechanisms surround the thesis of a satisfied precivilizational drive.

Freud's contention that the external exigencies of civilizational reality are responsible for hindering libidinal satisfaction is strikingly similar to the position of a subject operating under the influence of a fate neurosis. The symptoms of this type of neurosis involve instances where the consistent internal repression of an impulse appears, at least to the neurotic, as a contingent series of unfortunate accidents generated by an external reality independent of the neurotic's volition. This sort of individual's unconscious artfully manipulates things so that chance events "just so happen" to intervene right at the moment when she/he is supposedly about to achieve satisfaction:

> What psycho-analysis reveals in the transference phenomena of neurotics can also be observed in the lives of some normal people. The impression they give is of being pursued by a malignant fate or possessed by some 'daemonic' power; but psychoanalysis has always taken the view that their fate is for the most part arranged by themselves and determined by early infantile influences. (*SE* 18: 21)

What is the neurotic gain from illness in such cases? How does the subject procure a repressed pleasure from this projective externalization of his/her internal repression? Perhaps what is being repressed is a desire that is unfulfillable. Hence, assigning responsibility to empirical reality for the frustration of said desire sustains the illusion that this desire could be satisfied if circumstances permitted.[35] Civilization itself is, at times, Freud's externalization of the inherent deadlock of all drives, the metapsychological fact that *Trieb* cannot attain full enjoyment even if every empirical–historical barrier to individual gratifications were abolished.

At certain moments, Lacanian theory runs the risk of falling victim to the same fantasmatic illusion as the Freudian conception of civilization. In particular, the thematic of the Law encourages the notion that only the external Symbolic father stands between the subject and *jouissance* (that is to say, *das Ding* is lost because it is prohibited). The culmination of a Lacanian analysis is effectuated through "traversing the fantasy." Applied to the reading of Freud above, this would mean that the author of *Civilization and Its Discontents* is led to a confrontation with the fantasmatic kernel of his theorizations, namely, the fantasy of a full libidinal satisfaction anterior to socially induced repression. In the cases of typical neurotics, the Lacanian analyst, by revealing the fantasy behind the symptoms, shows the analysand how his/her ego behaves as the Hegelian beautiful soul, in other words, how the ego is complicit in the dissatisfaction marking his/her life history:

> Lacan does not imply . . . that the 'fully analyzed' subject becomes a kind of non-stop pleasure-seeking machine, but rather that desire stops inhibiting the subject from obtaining satisfaction. One of my analysands expressed the neurotic's predicament quite nicely by saying that he could not 'enjoy his enjoyment,' implying that his satisfaction was, in some sense, ruined or tainted by simultaneous feelings of dissatisfaction or displeasure. Perhaps one way of stating the aim of analysis is this: *to allow the analysand finally to be able to enjoy his or her enjoyment.* (Fink 1997b, 41)

Fink bases this understanding of the Lacanian end of analysis primarily on the eleventh seminar, quoting from that text in supporting this point.

And yet, in the same seminar, Lacan issues a series of statements problematizing the idea that, even after traversing the fantasy and completing therapy, one could, so to speak, "enjoy one's enjoyment."

To begin with, Lacan leaves open the question of what results from the end of analysis. He asks, "What, then, does he who has passed through the experience of this opaque relation to the origin, to the drive, become? How can a subject who has traversed the radical phantasy experience the drive?" (*SXI,* 273). He inconclusively responds by saying that, "This is the beyond of analysis, and has never been approached" (*SXI,* 273). Does Lacan mean that nobody has bothered theorizing about this form of ending analysis, or that nobody has ever actually ended analysis by successfully confronting *Trieb*? Lacan provides hints earlier in the seminar. First, he implies that drives are always "*Trieb* to come."[36] In other words, the anticipated enjoyment of the drives, in order to function as an effective lure perpetually prompting libidinal repetition, must remain inaccessible as an infinitely receding, forever-deferred promise of future *jouissance.* Then, later, Lacan associates satisfaction with impossibility:

> [I]f I refer to the drive, it is in so far as it is at the level of the drive that the state of satisfaction is to be rectified.
>
> This satisfaction is paradoxical. When we look at it more closely, we see that something new comes into play—the category of the impossible. In the foundations of the Freudian conceptions, this category is an absolutely radical one. The path of the subject—to use the term in relation to which, alone, satisfaction may be situated—the path of the subject passes between the two walls of the impossible. (*SXI,* 166–167)

Lacan does not say exactly what these "two walls of the impossible" are. However, this project does: The two walls are nothing other than the two antagonistic axes constitutive of the dysfunctional, split *Trieb.* Satisfaction of the drives is impossible, since it is always–already prohibited by the inherent structuration of each and every drive.

Consequently, the end of analysis cannot offer to the analysand the possibility of "enjoying enjoyment." The false promise of this very possibility is itself emblematic of a previously undiagnosed fundamental fantasy lying at the heart of the Freudian field—the equation, to put it in Lacanian parlance, of *Trieb* with *jouissance.* (On the contrary, using Lacan's terms, one could say that the difference between desire and *jouissance* is a difference internal to drive itself.) The theory of the split drive necessitates understanding that the last fantasy to be traversed is the fantasy that propelled the subject into analysis in the first place, that is, the fantasy of a "successful" cure. Lacan considers a defining feature of neurosis to be a

belief in "the *jouissance* of the Other."[37] Neurotics are often convinced that everybody in their everyday environment leads a normal, tranquil life. They imagine that, in stark contrast with how they feel, other people are able to savor and enjoy the simple little pleasures of quotidian existence, untainted by anxiety, guilt, or frustration. Lacan rightfully views this as an oppressive illusion guaranteeing the painful anguish of neurosis.[38] However, dissolving the mirage of the Other's *jouissance* doesn't amount to opening the door to the neurotic's drives, to freeing his/her untapped libidinal potentials.

The myth of the *jouissance* of the Other is not what prohibits individuals from enjoying their own drives. This myth is, instead, a fantasmatic by-product of the internal self-hindrance of *Trieb,* a means of sustaining the ultimate fantasy that one's own drives actually have the potential to function in a satisfactory manner. Freud speaks of the drives as internal stimuli. As internal, drives cannot be fled from (unlike external stimuli, from which the organism can withdraw itself). Thus, Freud claims that the standard defense mechanism against the drives qua internal stimuli is to project the threat they represent onto the external world. Treating them in this way enables the ego to fool itself into believing that a course of action will avail against them. The fantasy of the Other's *jouissance* is a manifestation of this mechanism. The neurotic conceals from himself/herself the impossible, self-defeating dynamic of his/her drives by subscribing to the belief that others in the beyond of the external environment do actually succeed in attaining this impossible enjoyment. The end of analysis must, therefore, obey the logic of the forced choice, of "cure or worse" (*guérison ou pire*): Either accept that one cannot peacefully coexist with one's drives after analysis, or endure even worse pain in believing that one is singled out to suffer in a unique, singular fashion. The latter path opens onto either the psychotic's personal hell of paranoid persecutory delusions or the depressive's martyr-complex supported by the endowment of suffering with a sublime aura. The former path represents an acceptance of Lacan's generalized conception of castration.[39]

Returning to the motif of the Law, this discussion of fantasy, *jouissance,* and the end of analysis permits rectifying possible misinterpretations of the Lacanian paternal function. The paternal Law is not like the civilizing intervention of Freudian social reality. There is no pure, chronologically anterior *jouissance* of *Trieb* behind the prohibitions articulated under the heading of the Name-of-the-Father (*le Nom-du-Père*). Freud's version of the Oedipus myth implies that, prior to the father threatening the child with castration for contemplating or committing incest, the child sexually lusts after his/her mother as the "primary love-object." On a superficial level, the emphasis on Law also seemingly indicates the pres-

ence of an infantile longing subjected to the dictates of the Oedipal family order. By contrast, Nasio notes that the incest prohibited by the paternal function isn't a pre-Oedipal desire, but a "mythical figure" constructed after the fact of the prohibition:

> We can specify that the incest of which we speak is a mythical figure with no relation to the concrete and morbid reality of the pitiful violation of the daughter by the father or the impure fondling of a son by his mother.
>
> As a doctrine that attempts to delineate the limits of its knowledge as best it can, psychoanalysis has understood that this very place where the sexual relation would be possible for the oedipal child, is where it proves to be impossible. At the very place where the mythical child supposes the *jouissance* of the Other—the ideal voluptuous pleasure of the incestuous sexual relation—psychoanalysis knows that the Other does not exist and that this relation is impossible to realize by the subject or impossible to formalize in a theory. (Nasio 1998, 29)

With the intervention of the *Nom-du-Père,* the Oedipalized child is faced with almost exactly the same options as the Kantian sensualist. The child chooses between renouncing the mother as an object of desire or, if she/he transgresses the Law, finding out that the expected *jouissance* of "incest" beyond the Law is horrific and revolting once acquired. If the Oedipus complex is taken in the most vulgar and literal sense, one could say that even if the child might unconsciously entertain incestuous intentions towards his/her mother, the actual realization of these wishes would be nothing short of traumatic. The intervention of Oedipal triangulation creates ex nihilo the Thing-like character of the (m)other beyond the Law. And, the mother appears desirable only so long as she remains partially veiled behind the screen of prohibition.

Furthermore, even prior to paternal intervention *à la* the Law, the mother herself (as the primary drive-object) introduces a "drifting" into the drive. The young child seeks not only physical sustenance from the maternal figure, but also "love," namely, the desire of the (m)other. However, of course, this desire is not an object in the sense that something like the breast is an object; it cannot be seized and held in place. The child wants to understand what is required to capture the motility of his/her mother's attention and affection.[40] The paternal function, instead of being an external third party superimposing itself on the mother–child dyad, arises out of the child's quest to pin down the wandering, mobile desire of the maternal (non)object:

> It is often said that in Lacan's theory, the mother is *replaced* by the father, or that the father is substituted in place of the mother. This account, however, can only be maintained as long as the terms 'mother' and 'father' are used unproblematically, with the meaning they have in ordinary language—a meaning that psychoanalysis is intended to analyze and not simply repeat. In this psychological narrative, maternity would thus be denigrated by Lacan, confined to the imaginary, and regarded as something that must be transcended. In fact, the very opposite is the case: the name-of-the-father function is strictly the *correlate* of the desire-of-the-mother, and not something that could possibly supersede it. Maternal *desire*—as distinct from the fantasy of plentitude in which desire and lack have no place—emerges as such only insofar as it has a symbolic point of reference *beyond the child*. The 'father' is thus a metaphor, in the sense of being that which the child *substitutes* as an answer to the enigma of maternal desire. Faced with the lack in the Other (the gap opened by the question 'What does the Other want?'), the child produces an answer in the form of the 'father,' whose essential function is to provide a symbolic point of reference, a localization, a grounding point that will give the lack in the Other a limit and a place. (Shepherdson 2000, 127)

Instead of paternal Law being the instigator of the loss of the maternal object, this Law (qua *Nom-du-Père*) is the after-effect of a gap that opens spontaneously within the Imaginary binarism of mother and child. As the concept of *objet a* emphasizes, external prohibition is far from being the original or sole factor responsible for object loss. The internal dynamics of the mother–child dyad force the infant to seek a third point of reference in order to comprehend what is necessary to win the love of the maternal figure. The ironic fate of this quest is that the answer the child alights upon—"If mother is so interested in father, he must have something that is able to capture mother's desire" (the "father" is an "x," that is, whatever the child identifies as adequate to what maternal desire wants, as what Lacan terms a "metaphor" for maternal desire)—is simultaneously what bars access to the mother. Put differently, the child discovers "father" as an answer to what his/her mother finds desirable. But, if this "father" functions in the proper paternal capacity (as the "No!" of the *Non-du-Père*), then, at the same time that the child learns what mother wants, "father" (that is, what mother wants) denies libidinal access to mother. The very quest for the (m)other's desire leads to the prohibition of this same desire. The vicissitudes of the child's libidinal economy dupe this economy into backfiring on itself.

As a result of this reinterpretation of the Lacanian Oedipal scenario, the Law must be understood as a "superfluous prohibition." What the father prohibits—namely, the full *jouissance* of the incestuous relationship—is always–already lost. The infant's desire is self-defeating, since it tends to produce the metaphor of the father–legislator out of its own spontaneous activity linked to its primary love-object. The "Real mother" of the subject's individual prehistory is Real in the sense of being both impossible (structurally inaccessible as *das Ding* due to the object *a* effect) and prohibited (via the intervention of the Law qua superfluous prohibition).[41] All of this serves as an allegory for the logic of *Trieb,* with the archetypical Oedipal child playing the role of drive personified. Like the child speculating about its mother's desire, drives inadvertently sabotage themselves. The axis of iteration demands a repetition of a given point of cathexis. In repeating this point, the point itself is irreversibly modified both as a phenomenal object of experience (over time, it shifts from Real Thing to Imaginary object) and as a Symbolic signifier (as per Lacan's claim that repeating a mark [for example, "1"] produces a sliding diachronic series [$1^1$, $1^2$, $1^3$ . . .]). Hence, the axis of iteration is complicit in rendering pure, Real repetition impossible; this axis is one of the very catalysts for the axis of alteration with which it is inherently incompatible. The axis of iteration's demand for the repetition of a representational point of cathexis is precisely what generates the antithetical axis of alteration as the axis that simultaneously mediates and frustrates this demanded repetition (see §§31–32).

How does external prohibition relate to the structural dynamic of *Trieb*? What does the mediation of transindividual reality—whether as the paternal function or the more general authority of civilization's rule of law—actually amount to if its traditional Freudian task of restricting the individual's libidinal economy is superfluous? Freud makes it seem as if prohibition is strictly opposed to the enjoyment of the drives. In fact, quite the opposite is the case. While drives are, in a way, their own worst enemies, external prohibition secretly sustains fantasies in which full *jouissance* is possible:

> [T]he only consistent answer to the question 'Why does the superfluous prohibition emerge, which merely prohibits the impossible?' is: in order to obfuscate this inherent impossibility—that is, in order to sustain the illusion that, were it not for the externally imposed prohibition, the full ('incestuous') gratification would be possible. (Žižek 1999d, 116)

External barriers to unobtainable *jouissance* relieve the subject of the burden of having to discover that enjoyment fails, that drives are constitu-

tively dysfunctional. The Kantian sensualist is able to continue believing that sex with the woman behind the bedroom door would have been fantastic . . . if only the gallows weren't standing outside the house. The Thing of *Trieb* retains its compulsive attraction strictly on the condition that it remains forever absent, just slightly out of reach.

Understanding both father and civilization as superfluous prohibitions of the impossible *jouissance* of *Trieb* permits unraveling those threads of *Civilization and Its Discontents* that lead to the cultural historicization—typically of a Marxist type—of psychoanalysis. Freudo-Marxism is not a perversion of Freud's thought, but, rather, a logically consequent extension of select Freudian theses about culture from the second topography. Freud maintains two claims justifiably employed in the Marxist appropriation of analysis: One, without the imposition of a collective rule of law, the human individual would be able to give free reign to his/her libidinal impulses; two, the imposition of a collective rule of law is responsible for instinctual renunciation.

And yet, in the same text, Freud wishes to claim that the discontent resulting from instinctual renunciation is an outcome of human beings' "psychical constitution," a part of their very "unconquerable nature."[42] If one takes seriously the latent myth (or, the fundamental fantasy) of a libidinal "paradise lost" embedded within the Freudian theory of culture, then his insistence on the constitutional nature of dissatisfaction seems nonsensical, contradictory, and even insidious. In other words, by simultaneously assigning the cause of instinctual renunciation to the historical emergence of civilization while nonetheless positing that the frustration thereby generated is part of human nature, Freud appears guilty of rationalizing the contingencies of his sociohistorical status quo. Freudo-Marxism, perhaps unknowingly, also embraces this fantasy of paradise lost. Except, instead of focusing on it, as Freud does, as a past time prior to humanity's expulsion from an instinctual Garden of Eden, Marxists of a Freudian bent herald libidinal liberation in a future social order yet-to-come.

So, does this mean that the Freudian theory of culture necessitates abandoning the ahistoricism of its metapsychology? Is the deadlock of drive a transitory historical phenomenon whose resolution will occur with the end of capitalism? Freud indeed distinguishes between particular civilizations and the general notion of civilization qua "rule of law." He uses the latter phrase in its broad sense to designate any organization of human life in which individuals are submitted to a higher authority, an authority more powerful than each single individual constituting the given group. For Freud, this basic feature of group existence demands instinctual renunciation—thus, libidinal suppression is not restricted to

capitalism alone. Freud's misunderstanding lies elsewhere: By separating the historical condition of civilization from the metapsychological constitution of the individual's libidinal economy, Freud is incapable of explaining why, without continuous external coercion, generations of humans would keep agreeing to the social stifling of their deepest urges. If the individual, left to his/her own devices, wants nothing other than to act out his/her drives, then Freudo-Marxism is correct in characterizing instinctual renunciation as an external, contingent feature of human history. But, if the drives, as irreducible elements in the ahistorical metapsychological constitution of the individual, actually desire an external hindrance, then it makes sense to see civilizational prohibition as ineliminable.[43] If "external" constraints are a residual by-product of the inherent antagonism within all drives, then some form of Freudian "civilization," as a prohibitory *Umwelt* in whatever particular forms, will always be necessary so as to sustain the fantasy of full satisfaction, regardless of whether this fantasy is of a Freudian past that is always–already lost or of a Marxist future endlessly *à venir.*

Consequently, the historicized evolution of sociocultural prohibitions on *jouissance* is a movement driven by a nonhistoricizable nucleus—the irresolvable conflict between the axes of *Trieb.* This prompts a rejection of Freud's false history of human collective life as well as the Marxist vision of a potential social order in which the lifting of capitalist repression allows individuals to "enjoy their enjoyment." The drives are not so much opposed to historicization as they are the motor behind its metamorphoses—"historical things are not historical simply because an accident happened, they are historical because it was necessary for a certain shape, a certain configuration, to come to light" (*SXIII,* 6/15/66).[44] Lacan's 1960 "Subversion of the Subject" essay touches upon this issue:

> This place is called *Jouissance,* and it is the absence of this that makes the universe vain.
>
> Am I responsible for it, then? Yes, probably. Is this *Jouissance,* the lack of which makes the Other insubstantial, mine, then? Experience proves that it is usually forbidden me, not only, as certain fools believe, because of a bad arrangement of society, but rather because of the fault (*faute*) of the Other if he existed: and since the Other does not exist, all that remains to me is to assume the fault upon 'I,' that is to say, to believe in that to which experience leads us all, Freud in the vanguard, namely, to original sin. (Lacan 1977i, 317)

Humanity's "original sin," expelling it from a nonexistent, retroactively posited libidinal paradise, is not a sociohistorical event per se. This fall is

intrinsic to the compulsion of the split *Trieb* to project its own internal antagonism onto external reality in the form of barriers to enjoyment—neurotic symptoms, the paternal function, and, finally, civilization as the prohibitory big Other that is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. ("The Other does not exist"—on the level of strictly material reality, the "social order" is a unifying illusion superimposed on a mere aggregate of [libidinally driven] individuals.) As late as the twenty-fifth seminar, Lacan hints at a "knotted" connection between the drives and their inhibitions.[45] Drives need these obstacles to sustain the fantasy of an achievable *jouissance.*[46] This fantasy is, in Lacanian parlance, the "*sinthome*" of *Trieb.*[47]

The task remaining for psychoanalysis—as a metapsychology of the singular psyche as well as a philosophical approach with social and political consequences—is to put itself through a second self-analysis (Freud's self-analysis being the first). Analysis needs to diagnose the traces still haunting it of a continued belief in an-Other satisfaction, the enjoyment of a *Trieb* reconciled with itself. It must continually struggle to unmask the multifarious formations of the "cunning of *Trieb.*" Both as a therapy and a theory, psychoanalysis's labor toward liberation—as a means of both alleviating individuals' symptoms and providing a viable platform for a critique of ideologies—must be guided by a firm commitment to discern and destroy the false idols of *jouissance,* to demystify and debunk the utopian lures of an unattainable freedom from the inescapable dynamic of the split drive. This commitment is to be cemented in place through an acknowledgement that human dissatisfaction—as castration, instinctual renunciation, civilization, and so on—is ultimately a "rock" resisting analysis, a *sinthome* of the split drive.

9

# The Axis of Iteration (S–P)

## §27 The Underlying Insistence of Drive-Source

Despite his significant changes of mind regarding drive theory, Freud consistently maintains that drives ultimately derive from a somatic source. Although their objects are contingent and their aims subject to hindrances and alterations, drives manifest themselves as bodily demands impinging upon the psychical apparatus. Their somatic nature is responsible for their quality of being constantly exerted economic forces. Freud's familiar 1915 definition of *Trieb* makes clear his belief in the organic origin of every drive, since the "demand for work" made upon the psyche issues from an allegedly physical substratum.

Freud's pronouncements about the borderline status of drives, as being between soma and psyche, are frequently taken to mark psychoanalysis's complete break with anything resembling biology. As far as Freud himself is concerned, this simply isn't true. For him, although the analyst grasps the drives only via their psychical representatives, these representatives have a libidinal value solely by virtue of an underlying bodily insistence. The "borderline" of drive can be characterized by the difference between a repetition compulsion in itself (the somatic demand for psychical "work") and what gets repeated under the influence of this compulsion (the representational elements of the drive—unary traits, recurrent object-choices, and so on). In Freud's view, this border is not a blurred line and does not signify an implicit deconstruction of the soma–psyche distinction—a line of demarcation indeed exists between the material ground of *Trieb* and its psychical vicissitudes.

In the eyes of many, Lacan's primary accomplishment is the insight, garnered through a structuralist turn applied to Freudian metapsychol-

ogy, that psyche has independence from and precedence over soma. If "the unconscious is structured like a language," and if language is an external symbolic order irreducible to the physical material composing the individual organism, then psychoanalysis is finally liberated from the implicit servitude to biology in which Freud's final speculations leave it. However, things aren't that simple. The primacy of the Symbolic in Lacan is characteristic of his work from the 1950s, but doesn't hold after the early 1960s—the Real becomes the central category of Lacanian thought after the passionate affair with structuralism cools. And, Lacan's understanding of drive changes accordingly.

At times, the later Lacan, in order to appear consistent with his earlier structuralist pronouncements, remarks upon the "linguistic" nature of *Trieb.* He points to Freud's comparison of the vicissitudes of the drives with the grammatical categories of the verb as evidence that, like the unconscious, drives are structured "like" language.[1] Does this mean that Lacan remains committed to a structuralist desomaticization of *Trieb*? Evidence from texts such as the eleventh seminar indicates a negative answer to this question. Not only does Lacan concede that the drive-source is most likely a vital, somatic aspect of drive structure, but he even links drive-objects to the anatomical organization of the human body. For Lacan, drive-sources are determined by the location of "rims"—that is, orifices (besides mouth and anus, Lacan includes the eyes and ears as openings)—connecting *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt,* the bodily interior and the exterior milieu.[2] Correlatively, drive-objects qua *objet petit a* are invariably entities closely associated with the rim-like orifices of the body—"These are the *objets a*—the breasts, the faeces, the gaze, the voice" (*SXI,* 242). Later, Lacan reiterates this assertion—"The common factor of *a* is that of being bound to the orifices of the body" (Lacan 1982b, 164).

The predictable Lacanian reply to this interpretation—namely, that Lacan's observations about *Trieb* preserve the importance of the somatic—is that the symbolic order draws or traces the anatomical contours of the libidinal economy. In an approach that treats Lacan as a Foucauldian of sorts, it is often contended that the "signifiers of the (parental) big Other"—for example, such linguistic, disciplinary practices as feeding rituals, toilet training, and imparted knowledge about "the birds and the bees"—are responsible for generating the erotogenic zones almost ex nihilo. These zones appear to be somatic only after the fact of their Symbolic inauguration. The Symbolic carves up the body, canalizing its libidinal potentials, and thus gives birth to the deinstinctualized drives.

With the reorganization of his theoretical architectonic around the Real, this anti-somatic, social constructivist reading of Lacan becomes

dubious—"The erogenous zones are linked to the unconscious because it is there that the presence of the living being becomes fixed" (*SXI,* 200). This sentence provokes multiple questions: Why does "the presence of the living being" (and not, at least explicitly, the "speaking being" [*parlêtre*]) become "fixed" around certain bodily areas? Why does the symbolic order consistently focus on highly specific zones and not just on any body parts? Is there a somatic reason for the openings of the body being the privileged points of attachment for Symbolically reinforced fixations? Is there a physical aspect of *Trieb* that actually does precede Imaginary and Symbolic mediation, regardless of whether or not this aspect is epistemologically accessible to the psychoanalyst? Answering these difficult chicken-and-egg style queries requires going back to some of Freud's earliest writings.

The complex nature of the relationships between the body, erotogenic zones, and the psychical apparatus is most evident in the phenomenon of hysteria. As early as 1893, Freud perceives the necessity of distinguishing between the anatomical body, as defined by biology and physiology, and the psychical body at play in hysteria. In "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses," Freud isolates specific features prompting the acknowledgement of a difference-in-kind between somatic symptoms of an organic origin and those psychosomatic symptoms resulting from hysteria as a strictly mental pathology. In particular, whereas truly somatic symptoms (for example, the paralysis of a limb) obey the laws of anatomy even when the individual sufferer is ignorant of anatomical facts, hysterical symptoms are conditioned by the individual's knowledge and conceptions of his/her body.[3] Somatic paralyses are based on the dysfunction of the anatomical limb or organ itself, while hysterical paralyses result from the distribution of psychical cathexes with respect to the ideational body image. Speaking of hysterical paralysis, Freud states, "It takes the organs in the ordinary, popular sense of the names they bear: the leg is the leg as far up as its insertion into the hip, the arm is the upper limb as it is visible under the clothing" (*SE* 1: 169). The externally visible surface of the body is of primary importance in determining the conversion symptoms of hysteria. Freud's crucial piece of evidence here is the fact that the internal, invisible connections of limbs and joints beneath the visible bodily surface are not affected by psychically induced problems.[4]

Perhaps the best-known example of the nonorganic nature of the hysteric's psychosomatic symptoms is the case of Dora. According to Freud's analysis, the persistent cough bothering Dora has no basis in any physical ailment affecting her respiratory system. Instead, as the patient's own associations reveal, she is preoccupied with the ongoing secret love affair between her father and Frau K. And, as she also knows, her father and Frau K. engage mainly in oral sex.[5] Thus, in Freud's view, Dora's

throat and mouth become, through their ideational/imagistic connection with the activity of oral sex, heavily cathected with repressed sexual impulses (namely, those impulses involved in the Oedipal "family romance"). Given the repressed status of Dora's desires for her father, her fixation upon his sexual activities with Frau K. can only manifest itself, under the regime of the ego's censorship, as physical discomfort, as pleasure that cannot be felt as such. This cough, as a psychoanalytic symptom, is only superficially a somatic matter. The key to its origin lies in Dora's knowledge that the throat and mouth can be employed not just for eating, drinking, and breathing, but for sexual pleasure as well.

As Freud makes explicit in his analyses of hysteria, the body image of the sufferer is the mediating surface or conduit whereby unconscious ideas, through displacements of cathexes, result in seemingly somatic ailments. Because the throat and mouth play a double role in terms of psychical significance, being both organs of nutritional/respiratory need as well as apparatuses of sexual enjoyment, repressed sexual conflicts can express themselves as pain experienced in connection with these body parts.[6] However, as Freud maintains elsewhere, the psychosomatic sufferings of the hysteric do not result from just any kind of unconscious conflict. What gets displaced onto select organs, via the body image/idea, is always tied to a repressed sexual content. In "The Aetiology of Hysteria," Freud states, "Whatever case and whatever symptom we take as our point of departure, *in the end we infallibly come to the field of sexual experience.* So here for the first time we seem to have discovered an aetiological precondition for hysterical symptoms" (*SE* 3: 199). Thus, the body image/idea in hysteria is not the primary cause or locus of origin for symptoms. Instead, this representational, psychical construct is a secondary network exploited by (unconscious) sexuality as a means of manifesting itself in the face of repression.

Furthermore, the early Freud also contends that sexuality, although not a purely natural affair automatically regulated by instinctual patterns, has a somatic source. The *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* unambiguously insists that three anatomical regions (oral, anal, and genital zones) serve as the foundations of all possible permutations of human sexuality. One might object that, in the *Three Essays,* Freud allows for virtually any region of the body to play a role as an erotogenic zone in the libidinal economy. But, in the conclusion of that text, he argues that certain zones, presumably those dictating the predetermined phases of libidinal "development,"[7] are organically predestined to achieve prominence in the individual's erotic life:

> [S]exual excitation in children springs from a multiplicity of forces. Satisfaction arises first and foremost from the appropriate sensory exci-

> tation of what we have described as erotogenic zones. It seems probable that any part of the skin and any sense-organ—probably, indeed *any* organ—can function as an erotogenic zone, though there are some particularly marked erotogenic zones whose excitation would seem to be secured from the very first by certain organic contrivances. It further appears that sexual excitation arises as a by-product, as it were, of a large number of processes that occur in the organism, as soon as they reach a certain degree of intensity. (*SE* 7: 233)

Consequently, the early Freud presents a situation where the body of the human organism originally contains certain quotas of excitation linked to specific regions of its anatomy. Although (epistemologically speaking) psychoanalysis never deals directly with biological or physiological matters, Freud posits that brute physical factors lie at the foundations of the psyche's libidinal economy. In hysteria, for example, the subject's mental conceptions pertaining to the body are exploited as pathways for discharging repressed drives. These repressed drives, according to the *Three Essays,* are ultimately derivatives of either the oral, anal, and/or genital zones. Although hysteria appears "polymorphously perverse" insofar as practically any part of the hysteric's body can fall under the spell of a symptomatic, psychosomatic attack, this wide range of anatomical distributions of cathexes really represents secondary modifications of a relatively limited number of libidinal sources qua erotogenic zones.

Does this mean that the body image/idea is merely a subordinate, residual phenomenon totally at the mercy of an ultimately biological–material force or substratum? In Freud's eyes, there is indeed a somatic fundament underlying the workings of the drives. Of course, the specificity of Freudian psychoanalysis resides in the fact that it doesn't focus on the biological dimension of (sexual) symptoms. Unlike a genuinely physical paralysis, the paralysis of the hysteric's limb is effectuated vis-à-vis his/her mental representation of the limb in question. But, Freud implies, the erotogenic cathexis whose displacement dictates the paralysis of the limb does have a distant origin in the body's core erotogenic zones, zones whose inherent quota of libido is an endowment from the natural world of organic constitution. In a certain sense, Freud employs a tacit schema of the soma–psyche relationship similar to the Lacanian *tuché–automaton* couple: The initial cause of the libidinal economy resides in the erotic energy of the human body itself; but, this energy is always–already channeled through nonnatural mediums, namely, vicissitudes organized by images and ideas.

As is common knowledge, Lacan's theory of the mirror stage addresses both the status of the body image as well as the relationship between this image and organic, physiological factors. Similar issues are

dealt with in his 1951 paper "Some Reflections on the Ego." As regards the function of the body image in the development of analytic symptoms, Lacan states:

> It is with the body-image that we propose to deal now. If the hysterical symptom is a symbolic way of expressing a conflict between different forces, what strikes us is the extraordinary effect that this 'symbolic expression' has when it produces segmental anaesthesia or muscular paralysis unaccountable for by any known grouping of sensory nerves or muscles. To call these symptoms functional is but to confess our ignorance, for they follow the pattern of a certain imaginary Anatomy which has typical forms of its own. In other words, the astonishing somatic compliance which is the outward sign of this imaginary anatomy is only shown within certain definite limits. I would emphasize that the imaginary anatomy referred to here varies with the ideas (clear or confused) about bodily functions which are prevalent in a given culture. (Lacan, 1953, 13)

The last sentence apparently situates Lacan firmly within a social constructivist conception of psychoanalytic theory—the body of the subject (here, the hysterical subject) is an imagistic *Gestalt* encoded and overwritten by cultural conceptions of "bodily functions." But, Lacan complicates this position further on in the same paragraph:

> It all happens as if the body-image had an autonomous existence of its own, and by autonomous I mean here independent of objective structure. All the phenomena we are discussing seem to exhibit the laws of *gestalt;* the fact that the penis is dominant in the shaping of the body-image is evidence of this. Though this may shock the sworn champions of female sexuality, such dominance is a fact and one moreover which cannot be put down to cultural influences alone. (Lacan 1953, 13)

If nothing else, Lacan here indicates that the penis, as a simple anatomical feature, is an invariant physiological nucleus behind the socially constructed layers of the *Gestalt*-like *imago*. Although the later Lacan refines his approach to this thorny aspect of the psychoanalytic view of the bond between sexuality and anatomy—seven years later, in the 1958 paper "The Signification of the Phallus," he transubstantiates the penis-as-organ into the "phallus-as-signifier"[8]—many critics suspect, with some justification, that the structuralist rearticulation of penis vis-à-vis phallus is a barely concealed endorsement of the antiquated slogan that "anatomy is destiny."

Leaving aside for now the difficulties surrounding the Lacanian

phallus, "Some Reflections on the Ego" has the value of highlighting what should be a rather obvious fact: The body image, latched onto by many interpreters as marking an irreducible difference between the psychoanalytic body and the organic body of the natural sciences, is partly based upon straightforward facts of human anatomy. The image the child sees of itself in the mirror is not simply a montage of visual elements socioculturally constructed in an immaterial vacuum. An aspect of what the child observes in the mirror is what she/he simply is as a physical being. Certainly, this isn't to say that the *imago* is not invested and mediated by numerous nonbiological factors—language, parental influences, sociocultural norms, and so on. However, certain interpreters of analytic theory need to be reminded not to get carried away to the point of liquidating the somatic dimension of psychical phenomena altogether. (Elizabeth Grosz nicely negotiates this balance in her reading of Lacan's mirror stage by referring to the Lacanian subject as "naturally social," namely, the nonnatural mediation of human subjectivity by specular and sociolinguistic matrices is a consequence of certain brute facts of human physiological nature.)[9]

What's more, even asking Lacan why, in the first place, an investment occurs in specific images constituting the foundation of the ego and its ideals is to touch upon a somatic level that Lacan himself never succeeds in fully dispensing with, no matter how often he denies psychoanalysis's relation to biology or physiology. In "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," Lacan reiterates that the biological fact of premature birth in human beings, directly entailing a prolonged period of helplessness and dependency on others, destines the infant to latch onto its reflected self-image as an anticipation of a later coordinated mastery of its own body. Lacan calls this fact "a physiological natal prematuration."[10] This organically determined phase of the human life cycle sets in motion the mechanisms whereby the young organism will be transformed into a nonorganic subject.[11] For the early Lacan, the matrix of body images exploited by the repressed and displaced libidinal fixations of the hysteric is a surface erected on the basis of a material *tuché*.

Up until at least 1960, Lacan maintains a theory, only occasionally mentioned, of what could be called a "natural symbolism" (but, as one should note, this is not a theory of a natural Symbolic). In the second seminar, he proposes that certain prevalent natural images furnish language with its initial signifying resources:

> The first symbols, natural symbols, stem from a certain number of prevailing images—the image of the human body, the image of a certain number of obvious objects like the sun, the moon, and some others. And that is what gives human language its weight, its resources, and its emo-

> tional vibration. Is this imaginary homogenous with the symbolic? No. And it would be a perversion of the meaning of psychoanalysis to reduce it to an emphasis on these imaginary themes . . . (*SII,* 306)

In all likelihood, the "perversion of the meaning of psychoanalysis" to which Lacan refers is Jungian analysis, with its reliance on a reservoir of basic, archetypal forms structuring the collective unconscious of humanity. But, the crucial difference between Lacan and Jung has yet to clearly reveal itself (it will be more evident once the distinction between "organ" and "function" is examined). For now, a few more references concerning the connection between the Imaginary and "nature" are useful.

The fourth seminar contains a specification of the motifs of chance and necessity as regards the role of the body in psychoanalysis. Lacan speaks of "accidents of the body," thereby indicating that he views the material, biological substratum of the Imaginary (that is, the anatomical structure of the human organism specularly reflected at the Imaginary level) as a mere contingency (a view relatively consistent with modern philosophy's assumptions about the empirical status of the human body).[12] The contours of the body are not logical necessities; perhaps the body could have been designed differently. Necessity, for Lacan, resides in the fact that this material contingency inevitably gives rise to certain nonmaterial effects. For example, the Imaginary and Symbolic effects of the phallic signifier become a necessary consequence of the contingent presence of a dangling little piece of flesh displayed as part of the visible anatomy of some members of the human species. Likewise, in the seventh seminar, Lacan discusses—perhaps to balance out his emphasis on the phallus—the symbolizations prompted by the Imaginary form of the female genitals.[13]

Based on this evidence alone, Lacan seems dangerously close to a farcical, vulgar notion of analytic interpretation: Any extended object is an implicit representation of the penis, and any concave thing is a reference to the vagina. The key to dispelling this superficial impression is located in the eleventh seminar. Lacan there discusses the problematic relationship between an organ and its supposed function:

> What is wrong about the reference to instinct, a reference that is so confused, is that one does not realize that instinct is the way in which an organism has of extricating itself in the best possible way from an organ. There are many examples, in the animal kingdom, of cases in which the organism succumbs to an excess, a hyper-development of an organ. The supposed function of instinct in the relation between organism and organ certainly seems to have been defined as a kind of morality. We are

> astonished by the so-called pre-adaptations of instinct. The extraordinary thing is that the organism can do anything with its organ at all. (*SXI,* 102)

Although not directly expressed in this passage, Lacan indicates that, as far as analysis is concerned, the organ is, as it were, a signifier. This is not to say that organs are nothing but the linguistic elements designating them within the symbolic order. Lacan uses the structuralist term "signifier" in both of two ways: One, a Lacanian signifier, as divorced from any definite signified (unlike Saussure's signifier), is an element that in and of itself is devoid of any intrinsic meaning/value;[14] two, as holds generally for Saussurian structuralism, a signifier is an element that takes on meaning/value primarily in terms of its differential relations with other signifiers. So, how is an organ a signifier?

Biological theories of instinct presume that specific organs have a preordained function, a function that harmonizes with the natural interests of both the individual organism and the species as a whole. In this way, each organ of the organism's body is coupled, in a one-to-one fashion, with a singular task: Eyes are for seeing the movement of prey; the nose is for detecting food and the territorial markings of fellow species-members; the genitals are for heterosexual intercourse; the anus is for excreting waste material. In questioning the presupposed one-to-one bond between an organ and a natural function, Lacan's point is that, especially for human beings, the body's organs cannot be reduced to single functions. This is evident in the earlier example of Dora's cough. The throat and oral cavity of the hysteric can become the site of a displaced libidinal cathexis precisely because these physical organs are often used in a functional capacity other than the "natural," biologically preordained one (the mouth can function not only as the entrance for nutritional substances, but also as a device for sexual pleasure). Like a signifier, the organ of the human body assumes a "value" in being associated with different functions. These functions are like signifieds, providing a meaningful role to the organ–signifier to which they are appended. Additionally, just as the Lacanian signifier is a "floating signifier"—because of the uncrossable bar resisting signification, no signifier can ever be definitively coupled with a single signified alone—so also the Lacanian organ is a floating corporeal thing, a meaningless lump of flesh once seen in isolation from its Imaginarily and Symbolically endowed functions. The hysteric's body testifies to the possibility of multiple confusions of organic functions resulting from the bar separating the corporeal *an sich* (the Real body, the corpo-Real) from its various potential employments (the Imaginary and Symbolic body, the denaturalized body of the analytic subject).

In the fourth seminar, this distinction between organ–signifier and function–signified is foreshadowed by Lacan's treatment of the id. He describes the id as simultaneously a natural being and a being that is always–already "structured" in a certain fashion:

> When we approach the subject, we know that there is already in nature something that is its *Es,* and that is structured in accordance with the mode of a signifying articulation marking all that exercises itself in the subject with its imprints, its contradictions, its profound difference from natural co-optations. (*SIV,* 50)

The id (*Es*) is, Lacan grants, something that is "already in nature." But, he cautions, it is nonetheless structured by "a signifying articulation." This sounds nonsensical. How can a natural entity already contain within itself a structure, given that the Lacanian use of the term "structure" usually refers to the sociolinguistic symbolic order? "Structure" and "Symbolic" are not necessarily synonymous in Lacan's work. Lacan sometimes refers to "Real signifiers" or "signifiers in the Real." Libidinally charged organs are precisely such Real signifiers. Each organ qua brute physical material of the body is, in Lacan's sense, literally a signifier. That is, the anatomical locales of the body serve as anchors (that is, *points de capiton*) for various contextualized functions in the libidinal history of the individual—"the body would be that privileged schematized object which functions as a kind of 'quilting point,' linking the field of signifiers to the field of signifieds" (Cutrofello 1997, 43). Like all Lacanian signifiers, the "natural" drive-sources of the id—that is, the organs from which the thrust of *Trieb* emanates—are, despite what biology proclaims, strictly meaningless coordinates capable of taking on a multitude of unconscious values.

Understanding the body's organs as Real signifiers avoids the typical conception of the Lacanian Real *à la* corporeality. When interpreters of Lacan designate the body as Real, they generally refer to the "pre-Symbolic" body, that is, the inert, undifferentiated *Stoff* prior to the divisions and demarcations instituted by the big Other.[15] Indeed, the Real is closely affiliated with Lacan's depiction of embodiment. In the economy of the drives, the Real is the recurrent force exerted by organic needs—"The real is . . . to be associated with the active yet ineffable stirrings of organic need, the unconsciousness of the body" (Boothby 1991, 19). And yet, the error of the vast majority of exegetical analyses of the bodily Real is to equate this notion with the image of an amorphous, unstructured, fleshy mass.

In the twelfth seminar, Lacan attempts to correct the understanding of the Real as a raw, opaque materiality (many of his own characterizations

of the Real are responsible for this view). He explicitly stipulates that the Real is itself structured:

> The relation of the signifier to the subject, in so far as it involves the function of meaning, passes through a referent. The referent, that means the real, and the real is not simply a raw and opaque mass. The real is apparently structured. We have moreover absolutely no knowledge of how as long as we do not have the signifier. I do not mean for all that, that if we do not know it, we have no relations to this structure. At different levels of animality these structures are called tendency, need and even necessarily what is called rightly or wrongly, but in fact in animal psychology, intelligence, one has to pass through this structure. (*SXII,* 12/2/64)

Two crucial points of clarification occur here. First, the Real does indeed contain its own structuration. In the context of the preceding discussion of the body, this means that the corporeal surface is not simply a smooth, continuous tabula rasa prior to the symbolic order carving up the child's anatomy. Instead, the bodily Real is a collection of diverse organ–signifiers, namely, drive-sources generating a pressure. Of course, the pathways of discharge for these organs—the plethora of function–signifieds corresponding to each organ–signifier—are multiple and contingent. Only in biological myth does the premeditation of nature ordain single, adaptive functions for human body parts. The truth behind such scientific fictions is that organs are floating signifiers, that is, elements taking on a use-value exclusively through moments in which a quilting action—the act in which the organ is employed for a certain use—fixes function–signifieds onto them. Žižek sometimes defines the Real as an impossible impasse in symbolization.[16] In the case of the body's organs qua Real signifiers, this corpo-Real is visible to the extent that any attempt to reduce an organ–signifier to one particular function–signified always fails.[17]

Furthermore, in saying of the manner in which the Real is structured that, "We have moreover absolutely no knowledge of how as long as we do not have the signifier," Lacan reiterates a now familiar contention: Although one presupposes the existence of the Real as anterior to symbolization, the Real is nonetheless known exclusively through the means by which it is expressed from within the confines of the symbolic order. One might take this to mean that the structure of the Real is a retroactive effect produced through the lens of the Symbolic. (Elsewhere, Lacan's portrayal of the Real body as a remainder or residue left over from the process of subjectifying symbolization certainly encourages such a reading.)[18] However, the sentence immediately following problematizes this

impression—"I do not mean for all that, that if we do not know it, we have no relations to this structure." There is a Real structure beyond Symbolic structure. And, although the Real is outside the strictly construed limits of psychoanalytic reason—it represents an impossible category for analytic epistemology—it still exerts its influence, an influence evident in its effects on the Imaginarily and Symbolically constituted subject.

Returning to the discussion of body image, Lacan's revision of the Real during the 1960s permits reinterpreting his earlier privileging of the Imaginary body. Up through the mid-1950s, Lacan contends that the body, insofar as it is considered in psychoanalysis, is an *imago* having no genuine relation to the anatomy of the human being as a biological organism. Particular imagistic *Gestalt*-formations serve as the building blocks for a specular Frankenstein, an interiorized visual façade permitting the inscription of neurotic symptoms. Interestingly, even while stressing the importance of the Imaginary/specular level in the construction of the psychical physique, Lacan maintains that the material contingencies of nature dictate the primacy of certain Imaginary and Symbolic elements. For Lacan, it's no accident that the phallus is allegedly so central for all sexed subjects in a wide range of historical and cultural contexts.[19] In other words, the Imaginary is not free to construct the body image in any old way it pleases, with no foreign, non-Imaginary influences at all. The Lacan of the 1930s through the early 1950s needs a theory of the body as beyond or behind the Imaginary. (His tacit assumption that select anatomical features steer the otherwise socioculturally constructed development of the Imaginary testifies to this requirement.) An adequate theoretical expression of this other kind of body doesn't come along until the 1960s.

The danger of venturing into speculations about the body beyond/behind the Imaginary is that one might revert to Freud's fallacious appeals to a biology-yet-to-come as a vindicating foundation for psychoanalysis. The Lacan of the 1960s tries to circumvent this risk by describing the corporeal Real in the language of topology.[20] When Lacan speaks of the vital drive-source qua organic, somatic locus of *Trieb,* he limits himself to designating it as a "rim," "opening," or "hole."[21] No attempt is made to link psychoanalysis's cognizance of the body with the knowledge of human anatomy delineated by the natural sciences. Lacan indeed acknowledges that the body cannot be excluded from analytic metapsychology, especially since its insistence (as, for example, Real need) sets the libidinal economy in motion. The late Lacan even suggests that the Imaginary mirror image reflects the Real, thus indicating that the material surface of the body is the givenness of the Real shaping the contours of the *imago.*[22] But, due to both the unknowable quality of the Real as well as the conviction

that psychoanalysis is an inquiry of an entirely different kind from biology—its object (the representational unconscious) and corresponding level of description are quite distinct from anything in the natural sciences—Lacan concedes that the causal influence of the organic is, for the analyst, a tychic lost cause.[23]

Consequently, for psychoanalysis as a specific theoretical discourse properly distinguished from fields such as biology and physiology, the bodily Real, as the bundle of organ–signifiers in and of themselves, is a presupposed yet unknown factor outside the epistemological limitations of analytic investigation. (In fact, the delineation of the ontological status of psychoanalytic/metapsychological entities beyond their regulative–rational roles requires exceeding, whether through the natural sciences or philosophy, the investigative parameters of analysis itself.) Although Lacan frequently appears to belittle and dismiss the biological sciences, he actually respects the fact that psychoanalysis and biology are not mutually exclusive apparatuses competing for a monopoly upon a univocal truth about human beings. Psychoanalysis challenges the claim, frequently made by the natural sciences, that biomaterialist explanations of the human organism will inevitably exhaust all that can be said about the human condition, and, more specifically, about mental life. But, just because analysis is justified in attacking the reductionist agenda of the scientific treatment of human beings as organisms doesn't mean that it is thereby licensed to make similarly extreme claims on the opposite end of the spectrum, that is, claims regarding the utter futility of treating human beings as organisms.[24]

In fact, whenever theorists—frequently of a Lacanian stripe, or at least Continental philosophers influenced by Lacan in their reading of Freud—proclaim that psychoanalysis renders utterly obsolete the Cartesian binarism between mind and body, they are effectively overstepping the conceptual limits established by the later Lacan's relegation of the corporeal to the category of the Real. Implicit in Lacan's rethinking of the (absent) role of the body in metapsychology is a kind of Kantian critical turn, a warning about the presence of a dividing line between what can be known within the Freudian field and what must remain, for this field, eternally ungrounded speculation. The seminars of the 1970s exhibit this turn. In the twentieth seminar, Lacan states—"If there is something that grounds being, it is assuredly the body" (*SXX,* 110). Since the unconscious, as the proper object of psychoanalysis, is "pre-ontological" (as already claimed in "Position of the Unconscious" as well as the eleventh seminar), the ontological level of the body is not what is at stake in analytic investigation. Later, during a 1975 lecture given at Yale, Lacan refers to the Freudian id as a bodily dimension belonging to the Real—"The

real isn't the exterior world; it's also anatomy, it has to do with the entirety of the body . . . The id of Freud is the real" (Lacan 1976, 40).[25] A distinction between id and unconscious sufficiently demarcates the boundaries of analytic investigation. The id is the seat of the drives, the locus of drive-sources; the id functions as the presupposed, quasi-somatic "x" of analytic drive theory. The unconscious, on the other hand, is the representational order affected by the workings of the id; the chains of linguistic associations, body images, and various mnemic traces focused on by the analyst are situated as part of the Imaginary and Symbolic unconscious—not the Real of the embodied id. Hence, psychoanalysis doesn't displace or falsify biological discourses on human beings. It simply has nothing to say about the specific object of those discourses.

In a study centered primarily on Lacan's earlier thought, Boothby asserts that Lacanian theory calls for a future elaboration of the connections existing between the Imaginary and the bodily Real. He sees great promise in further explorations of the means by which specular/perceptual mechanisms affect the body's functions:

> [W]e might undertake an inquiry of the most fundamental sort into the nature of perception in the human being and would seek to illuminate the problematic relation of perceptual mechanisms to the totality of the body's vital functions. A primary goal of such a study would be to understand how and why the most elemental function of perception, particularly visual perception, operates selectively not merely with respect to the objects that it disembeds from an environing background but also with respect to the functioning of the impulse-life of the body. Though this project must remain an agenda for the future, Lacan has already put it on the map of psychoanalytic theory . . . (Boothby 1991, 226)

The early Lacan's conjectures, being heavily focused on the significance of vision and the structure of the Imaginary ego, certainly call for inquiries into the effects of perceptual phenomena on the somatic life of the subject (this is indicative of the early Lacan's somewhat more phenomenological bent).[26] However, the later Lacan disavows the possibility of psychoanalysis exhaustively understanding, from within the confines of its own conceptual framework, the plethora of relations between soma and psyche. By the 1970s, he would likely view such inquiries as interesting, but nonetheless not part of the Freudian domain defined by the study of the unconscious. As Real, the body is an inaccessible limit to psychoanalytic experience. At the end of his intellectual itinerary, Lacan concludes that analysis proper must finally acknowledge this limit as such.

Despite the pessimism evident in Lacan's final musings on the possi-

bility of a psychoanalytic ontology of embodiment, theorists continue to bang their heads against the wall of this Real. Why not ground psychoanalysis on descriptive foundations that have no need for a reference to the problematic soma–psyche distinction? Why bother continuing down a conceptual road that has thus far proven to be so intractably futile? In the case of drive theory, the fundamental phenomenon in question as regards the arepresentational impetus impinging upon the psychical apparatus—that is, the drive-source as an "x" assumed to be a sort of somatic energy—is what Freud calls "*Wiederholungszwang*." For Freud, this compulsive repetition could only be explained through recourse to a biological substratum responsible for generating the compulsion. But, this substratum, as texts like *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* demonstrate, must remain a hypothetical extrapolation on the part of the analytic theorist. Lacan's strategy, at least during his structuralist phase, is to locate the origin of repetition in the "signifying chain" (as in, for example, the postface to the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'").[27] In other words, with the "insistence of the letter," Lacan contends that the inherent nature of the representational elements constituting the unconscious, and the inevitable connections established between said elements, results in an overdetermination of the ego. Slips of the tongue, bungled actions, and the automatism of compulsive behavior are structurally reduced to effects of the return of repressed signifiers. This aspect of the early Lacan is the one most frequently employed by those wishing to desomaticize psychoanalysis. Thus, the theme of repetition polarizes analysis along the lines of a fairly traditional soma–psyche division: The later Freud appeals to a biological foundation on the basis of the "evidence" of compulsive repetition, and the early Lacan adamantly maintains that only the iterable signifier could possibly be responsible for the recurrent libidinal patterns observed by the analyst.

The later Lacan modifies his structuralist claims: The Real of the body, although epistemologically inaccessible for analysis, must play a significant role in shaping the subject. And yet, as Real, the body cannot be explored further by metapsychology; the corporeal (as corpo-Real) marks a limit to the analyst's speculations. So, is this as far as psychoanalytic theory can go? Must the delineation of *Trieb,* for instance, come to a halt with a mere acknowledgement that a mysterious corporeal substance or energy functions as a presupposed yet unknowable possibility condition for the libidinal economy? If one envisions the future of psychoanalytic theory strictly in terms of an either/or choice between a quest for empirical confirmations from the natural sciences or a decisive repudiation of biological factors, then perhaps the debate between the camps aligning along this divide should continue. However, this debate promises to be an ongoing affair of indefinite length.

The Lacanian influence tends to manifest itself as an effort not only

to problematize the more biological aspects of Freud's work, but also to entirely dismiss the relevance of biological investigations into the human subject. However, taking seriously Lacan's final pronouncements on the place of the body should strike a cautionary note. Defining the material body as Real means that psychoanalysis has nothing to say about this body qua positive knowledge. This entails that attempts to treat Freud as a "biologist of the mind" should be rigorously contested. But, on the other hand, this also means that Lacanian theory must perform an internal critique of its own opposite tendencies. In particular, the idea that psychoanalysis could finally succeed in definitively liquidating the relevance of the natural sciences for an understanding of the human subject betrays an underlying hubris. The social constructivist version of Lacan assumes that one has had a privileged insight into the biological level on its own terms, and that this insight thereby permits decisively situating corporeal substance (or, decisively excluding the corporeal from the subject of psychoanalysis). Implicit in the concluding state of Lacanian thought is the denial that a bird's eye view on either side of the soma–psyche dichotomy is possible. No biological foundation could ever be unearthed that would indubitably confirm once-and-for-all concepts like the unconscious, *Trieb,* the ego, and so on; correlatively, the analytic theorist cannot presume that the body has been successfully "put in its place," namely, that somatic factors can be easily dismissed as having nothing to do with metapsychology. Given this indecisive impasse, why not search for a third path? Why not abandon descriptive languages reliant upon notions derived from psychoanalysis' mind–body controversies?

In the fourfold organization of *Trieb,* the drive-source is usually the feature taken as marking the influence of the somatic in the functioning of the drives.[28] While aims and objects are treated as malleable, modifiable variables in the equation of drive structure, the source is seen as an energetic, physiological constant underlying the otherwise unstable vicissitudes of the drive. This view, although plausible in a certain sense, leans in the direction of the later Freud's questionable effort to situate psychoanalysis under the heading of the natural sciences. The constancy, invariability, and overriding nature of the repetitious features of *Trieb* convince Freud that there must be a biological motor within the psychical apparatus. This is a matter of the limitations of Freud's imagination, and his claims about the necessity of assuming a biological substratum for *Trieb* rest on an appeal to ignorance. No direct, empirical evidence for a somatic nucleus qua drive-source is ever uncovered. (In 1915, Freud himself concedes that the study of drive-sources as organic origins of libidinal life lies outside the scope of psychoanalysis as a discipline.)[29] The conception of the drive-source as biological is nothing more than a working presupposition on the part of psychoanalytic reason.

If one remains strictly within the limits of analytic discourse and the objects of investigation designated therein, all that is known about the drive-source—the regulative idea of a unity/constancy beneath the shifting surfaces of aims and objects—is that there is repetition. The advantage of limiting the attributes of the drive-source to the simple temporal fact of repetition itself is that it avoids entering into the conflict between those who posit a somatic fundament for the libidinal economy and those who forcefully deny any biological dimension in psychoanalysis. Neither side could ever achieve a genuine victory that would rectify the conflict, since no empirical evidence could ever be accepted by either side as authoritative.

What can be known? The analytic observer operates with a minimal set of a priori conceptual assumptions—the essential scaffolding of metapsychology—making possible his/her interpretive labor. For instance, the ability to interpret a series of object-choices as interrelated is, at root, underpinned by the presumption that part of *Trieb* seeks to repetitiously recover particular past objects or aspects of such objects. Assuming the operation of a tendency to repeat—this tendency is itself the drive-source—the analyst scrutinizes the manifest aims and objects available for observation, looking for iterated features common to separate elements within this field. The "substance" of the drive-source permits discerning an underlying constancy/cohesion within the diachronic unfolding of libidinal life histories. Whether or not this cohesion is ultimately a product of either the body or the signifier is not only of marginal relevance in terms of the actual application of metapsychological concepts to the field of interpreted analytic phenomena, but is a question without a likely resolution. Treating the drive-source simply as a repetitious temporality—a perpetually reiterated demand for the recurrence of an object and/or state of affairs—is sufficient for a nuanced account of psychoanalytic drive theory beyond the deadlocks arising along the disputed border between soma and psyche.

## §28 Affectivity and the Recurrence of Drive-Pressure

Although the drive-source seemingly merits being conceptualized as a somatic locus of *Trieb,* all that psychoanalysis can know of it from within the proper boundaries of its metapsychological system is that "there exists repetition." Whether the source of drives is a biological, physiochemical substance or an introjected set of repressed representations (as in, for ex-

ample, Laplanche's notion of the source-objects of the drives) is a matter of speculation. Furthermore, the difference between these two positions becomes negligible in an examination of the temporal structure of *Trieb*. The "x" of the source at stake between those biologizing the Freudian drives and those arguing for a desomaticization of psychoanalysis is, in either case, merely that which is presupposed as the factor responsible for the constancy of drives. The drive-source is the a priori metapsychological assumption that the consistency of a regularly reiterated demand for satisfaction underlies an otherwise disparate series of object-choices. The constant, repetitious iteration of a brute demand for enjoyment is a sufficient conception of the drive-source. Accompanying the repetition of the source is the regular recurrence of drive-pressure—the gradual increase in affectively experienced tension stemming from an unsatisfied drive-source. The source and pressure together constitute the side of *Trieb* that obeys a repetitious (a)temporal structure.

Along with the source, the pressure of the drive is also frequently conceived of as closely tied to the somatic level of the libidinal economy.[30] Drive-pressure manifests itself mainly via affects (Freud tends to associate affects with the somatic).[31] And, like the source, drive-pressure is a feature inherent to all drives—"By the pressure [*Drang*] of an instinct we understand its motor factor, the amount of force or the measure of the demand for work which it represents. The characteristic of exercising pressure is common to all instincts; it is in fact their very essence" (*SE* 14: 122). Unlike the aims and objects of drives, which can be inhibited and/or altered, all drives share a minimal common form in terms of source and pressure. Pressure registers itself as "negative affect," that is, an unpleasurable sensation resulting from the accumulation of tension when the demands of the drive-source make themselves felt. The key affective avatar of *Trieb* is anxiety.

Freud often characterizes anxiety as an affective state that arises when a repressed drive becomes too powerful. In other words, when an unconscious impulse threatens to break through the defensive barriers erected by the labor of repression, the ego experiences anxiety. (Because anxiety is an affect, it resides in the ego's sphere of conscious experience, not in the unconscious.)[32] Freud writes:

> In the case of external danger the organism has recourse to attempts at flight. The first thing it does is to withdraw cathexis from the perception of the dangerous object; later on it discovers that it is a better plan to perform muscular movements of such a sort as will render perception of the dangerous object impossible even in the absence of any refusal to perceive it—that it is a better plan, that is, to remove itself from the

> sphere of danger. Repression is an equivalent of this attempt at flight. The ego withdraws its (preconscious) cathexis from the instinctual representative that is to be repressed and uses that cathexis for the purpose of releasing unpleasure (anxiety). The problem of how anxiety arises in connection with repression may be no simple one; but we may legitimately hold firmly to the idea that the ego is the actual seat of anxiety and give up our earlier view that the cathectic energy of the repressed impulse is automatically turned into anxiety. If I expressed myself earlier in the latter sense, I was giving a phenomenological description and not a metapsychological account of what was occurring. (*SE* 20: 92–93)

Freud mentions his earlier conception of anxiety from the first topography, namely, that anxiety is libido transformed under the constraints of repression. In the second topography, anxiety isn't transformed libidinal energy. Instead, it operates as a signal, as an ego-level manifestation that a repressed drive's demands for satisfaction are becoming increasingly powerful (that is to say, the repressed drive itself is not transformed into anxiety). What's more, the passage above describes anxiety as the by-product of an "internal attack" by the id upon the ego.[33] Repressed drives threaten the ego from within the realm of the individual's psychical interior. As with external dangers, the ego must find a means of defending itself.

In the 1926 text *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,* Freud argues that neurotic phobias are the symptomatic crystallizations of the conflict between repressed drives and the ego's defensive mechanisms. As known, the ego, in the second topography, is the negotiator between the id and external reality. When a drive comes into conflict with reality, it must be repressed and subsequently sublimated. However, sometimes an appropriate subliminatory pathway is not found, and the economic force of the drive's demand for satisfaction accumulates. The drive thereby becomes an internal danger in two senses: One, the drive demands a prohibited form of satisfaction—that is, it risks incurring unpleasurable "punishments" from the outside world; two, the repressed drive threatens to overwhelm the ego once its unmet demands reach a certain fevered pitch. Unlike external dangers from which the ego can flee, a repressed yet unsuccessfully sublimated drive is an inescapable menace. So, the ego projects the internal danger outward, and transforms an object or state of affairs in its *Umwelt* into an anxiety-laden phobia. The ego fools itself into believing that the anxiety it experiences is the result of something in reality that can be avoided, instead of realizing that this negative affect is the unavoidable representative of the ferocious, uncompromising drive-source.

Previously, in the first topography, Freud speaks of phobias as illu-

sory projections functioning exclusively to transform an internal, inescapable danger into an external, manageable one. In 1926, he alters his position. Although phobic anxiety is itself unrealistic—the phobias appear as irrational, ungrounded fears—its origins lie in a realistic fear of an actual danger located in objective reality:

> On a previous occasion I have stated that phobias have the character of a projection in that they replace an internal, instinctual danger by an external, perceptual one. The advantage of this is that the subject can protect himself against an external danger by fleeing from it and avoiding the perception of it, whereas it is useless to flee from dangers that arise from within. This statement of mine was not incorrect, but it did not go below the surface of things. For an instinctual demand is, after all, not dangerous in itself; it only becomes so inasmuch as it entails a real external danger, the danger of castration. Thus what happens in a phobia in the last resort is merely that one external danger is replaced by another. (*SE* 20: 126)

Freud's revision of his theory regarding the relationship obtaining between anxiety and projective defense mechanisms reflects the same assumption about *Trieb* found in *Civilization and Its Discontents*—"an instinctual demand is, after all, not dangerous in itself." This assumption is precisely what needs to be contested. The demands of the drive-source are inherently dangerous insofar as what they demand—namely, the unmodified reiteration of early forms of enjoyment—is utterly impossible. Phobic anxiety is not just a displaced fear of paternal punishment, but is a conditioned result of the self-defeating structure of *Trieb*. This failure is the internal danger from which no flight is possible.

In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,* Freud traces all unrealistic forms of neurotic anxiety to the "realistic" fear of castration at the hands of a jealous, vengeful father. In general, fear is, for Freud, an affective state conditioned by real dangers, whereas anxiety is "objectless" to the extent that the entity or state of realistic affairs upon which the original fear is based remains known only to the unconscious.[34] Repression transforms determinate fear into the amorphous, vague affect of anxiety. Anxiety is free-floating fear, namely, fear detached from its original cause in external reality and displaced onto phobic substitutes. The later Freud insists that the realistic bedrock of unrealistic anxiety is not the internal threat posed by the drives, but the external threat of castration.[35] All phobias, endowed with their quota of neurotic anxiety, are masks for the primal fear of castration. What does Freud mean by "castration?" Should this term be understood in its ordinary sense?

The Oedipus complex is a kind of metaphorical narrative for the confrontation between two poles—the libidinal economy of the individual (the drives and the pleasure principle) as confronted by the limits of the external world (the restriction of the drives by reality). Like Freud's mythicized history of the development of civilization, the Oedipal drama stages the larger sociocultural situation in which individuals come to accept instinctual renunciation as part of a social contract of sorts. Castration is Freud's name for the mythical threat uttered by the paternal figure, the Oedipal actor embodying the reality principle. Put differently, castration is one of the names for that which forces the subject to renounce his/her partial drives insofar as these drives are initially connected to a primary object-choice (the maternal figure as the primary love-object). Laplanche explains:

> [I]n short, all the drives succumb as a whole to the prohibition, the prohibition that is conveyed by the castration complex. Hence, on the side of the repressing: the castration complex; and on the side of the repressed: the set of drives that this complex cannot allow . . . (Laplanche 1980a, 146)

Laplanche continues:

> This re-centering signifies that the castration complex is placed henceforth as the *apriori* condition, regulating inter-human exchange as the exchange of sexual objects—the *apriori* condition where law and prohibition find themselves inseparable . . . (Laplanche 1980a, 147)

Castration is not a contingent factual experience in the early childhood of those unfortunate enough to have brutish fathers who threaten to slice off their body parts if they misbehave. Rather, it serves as a metaphor for that a priori condition whereby the drives must be separated from their archaic objects of enjoyment. Typically, the partial drives are said originally to cathect parts of the mother's body. The paternal threat of castration amounts to a prohibition of the mother as the holder of or container for the partial drives' initial object-choices. With castration, the child doesn't stand under the looming threat of potentially undergoing a feared physical punishment in the future. Instead, she/he actually and inevitably undergoes the loss of his/her primary drive-objects.

Laplanche aptly observes that the later Freud's revision of his theory of anxiety—Freud reverses his earlier stance, claiming that it is not the repression of the drives that leads to anxiety, but realistic anxiety (the fear of castration) that necessitates the subsequent phase of repression and

(phobic) displacement of the drives—amounts to abandoning the earlier theme of *Trieb* as itself an extimate entity disturbing the ego.[36] Apparently, Freud no longer sees the drives as threatening or dangerous: Drives only become dangerous when they risk bringing the individual into conflict with a prohibitory *Umwelt*. Freud thus implicitly entertains the notion that, if it weren't for the intervention of the father's external authority, the drives would not be colored by the negative affect of anxiety. (Just as, if it weren't for civilization, the drives would be able to freely seek and obtain satisfaction.)

However, in understanding anxiety as an essential aspect of drive-pressure, anxiety cannot be dismissed merely as a derivative after-effect of the paternal prohibition of incest. Anxiety is symptomatic, not of an early fear of an entirely external threat, but of an inherent margin of dissatisfaction plaguing *Trieb*. On the issue of anxiety, the early findings of Freud must be revived in the face of his later revisions. Prior to the modifications wrought by the second topography's emphasis on external reality as the primary source of unpleasure, anxiety is portrayed as a form of unpleasure corresponding to an increase in tension resulting from an unmet (somatic) demand. The drives, paying no heed to the sphere of reality with which the ego deals, insistently press for actions leading to various gratifications. Especially when these demands occur in infancy, the individual is relatively helpless; she/he often cannot perform the necessary actions to procure the state of satisfaction demanded by the drive-source. Freud argues that, during early life, the psyche's only means of defending itself against the onslaught of the drives is to hallucinate the satisfaction unavailable in actual reality. When reality-testing reveals, beneath the child's hallucinations, the factual absence of the concrete conditions requisite for meeting the drive's demands, anxiety again arises. Laplanche correctly points out that the original danger situation in "reality" is the pre-Oedipalized infant's experience of helplessness before the clamoring of his/her drives, of his/her inability to fend off the internal attack of *Trieb*.[37] The Oedipal danger of castration comes later.

As an adult, the individual finds his/her drives dangerous, not simply because the Law prohibits their desired form of gratification, but because the initial objects to which they are attached are always–already inaccessible. The drive-source is the aspect of *Trieb* that Freud deems "essentially conservative." The source insists on recovering the initial object and/or state of affairs in which the cathexis defining the particular drive to which that source belongs was first forged. The *objet a* effect guarantees the loss of the initial object, rendering the Law (in this case, castration) a superfluous prohibition. In this light, what the drive-source demands is impossible for the subject to fulfill. Due to shifts in the constitution of ob-

jects of experience correlative to modifications in the structure of subjectivity, the earliest forms of "enjoyable objects" become irrecoverable, nostalgic vanishing points toward which the drive-source refuses to stop moving. The drive-source's compulsive, repetitious insistence on the impossible recovery of *das Ding* is precisely the "internal attack" from which the subject is unable to flee. Therefore, in a secondary process involving the standard strategy of the defense mechanism that projects inner dangers outward, "castration" is identified as the reason why drives are thwarted from obtaining enjoyable satisfactions.[38] And, as external, the paternal threat can be avoided by the subject through behavior in conformity with the dictates of the familial lawgiver.

Before going any further, given that the concept of object *a* now appears pertinent to this discussion of anxiety, it is appropriate to briefly outline the Lacanian interpretation of this area of Freud's thought. On several occasions, Lacan points to his own work on anxiety as proof that, despite what many accuse him of, he doesn't neglect the place of affect in analytic theory.[39] Lacan's own conception of anxiety is fully developed in the tenth seminar (1962–1963)—and, this conception is foreshadowed by claims put forth two years earlier during the eighth seminar (1960–1961). Prior to the 1960s, Lacan's view of anxiety is quite faithful to Freud's 1926 position. In the fourth seminar (1956–1957), Lacan reaffirms a clear distinction between fear (realistic anxiety conditioned by actual external dangers) and anxiety (the neurotic repression and ensuing displacement of realistic castration anxiety onto phobic substitutes). Lacan endorses the notion that neurotic anxiety is "objectless."[40] Starting in the 1960s, with the reorientation of his understanding of anxiety around the concept of object *a,* the Freudian characterization of anxiety as a detached affect lacking a determinate object is precisely what Lacan rejects.

In the eighth seminar, Lacan, having recently developed *objet petit a* as a distinct conceptual contribution to metapsychology, speaks of an intimate rapport between the object-cause-of-desire and the affect of anxiety. He states—"The signal of anxiety has an absolutely necessary link with the object of desire . . . the signal maintains the rapport with the object of desire" (*SVIII,* 428). Lacan continues—"anxiety is the final mode, the radical mode, under which the subject continues to support, even if in an unsupportable fashion, the rapport with desire" (*SVIII,* 429). How is it that anxiety is complicit in maintaining the subject's connection with his/her repressed desires? Phobias provide Freud's primary examples of neurotic anxiety. In phobias, a particular object and/or state of affairs, usually of a relatively banal and everyday nature, becomes terrifying and unbearable for the neurotic individual. The subject goes to great lengths

to avoid situations in which the anxiety-laden object or situation is likely to be encountered. Lacan insists that the phobic object epitomizes the link between anxiety and desire.[41] Why? What is Lacan's reasoning here?

According to Freud's later conception of anxiety, a libidinal impulse is repressed because it comes into conflict with external reality—the impulse becomes dangerous because it is prohibited by a more powerful influence in the subject's environment. In neurotic anxiety, the repressed, realistic fear of castration is displaced and attributed to something else. The recipient of this displacement is transformed into the phobic object. Originally, the individual fears punishment from his/her *Umwelt* because she/he has compulsive urges to indulge in prohibited forms of enjoyment. These urges must be repressed and held in check so as to avoid the retributions of reality. Thus, there is an intimate link between the threat of castration and the repressed drives presumed to entail castration as a consequence of their fulfillment. Anxiety-laden, phobic objects provide masks for a displaced fear of castration; these masks signify the genuine, repressed desires of the subject. What the neurotic fears about the phobic object, insofar as this object represents his/her repressed urges, is the possible uncontrollable irruption of his/her desire. The neurotic's ego fears being overwhelmed by *Trieb*.

Lacan more thoroughly develops the alleged co-implication of desire and anxiety in the tenth seminar. He stresses that, instead of being objectless in Freud's sense, anxiety is an affect triggered precisely by the proximity of *objet petit a*. As part of this argument, Lacan describes anxiety as "that which does not deceive."[42] If anxiety is the signal, registered by the ego, of a repressed desire, then this affect is the surest thread by which to make one's way toward finding the repressed desire—"All the switching points are possible starting from something which is anxiety, which is, when all is said and done . . . 'what does not deceive,' what is beyond doubting" (*SX,* 12/19/62). When anxiety arises, there can be no doubt that a veiled representative of the subject's true desires is present, a representative intimately connected with what the subject really wants.[43] Lacan states:

> [T]his certainty here, I already named it, you can recognise it, because I already called it by its name: it is that of the anxiety linked to the approach to the object, this anxiety which I told you must be defined as that which does not deceive, the only certainty, which is founded, unambiguous, that of anxiety: anxiety precisely in so far as every object escapes it. And the certainty linked to the recourse to the primary cause and the shadow of this fundamental certainty, its shadowlike character is what

> gives it this essentially precarious aspect . . . This certainty . . . is a displacement, a secondary certainty, and the displacement involved is the certainty of anxiety. (*SX,* 5/8/63)

With anxiety, the conscious ego doesn't comprehend exactly why it is the case that a given object or situation provokes an upsurge of negative affect. Often, the phobias of neurotics appear irrational and ungrounded even to themselves. ("I don't know why I'm so afraid of going outside, but nonetheless . . .") Beneath the guise of Imaginary doubt and incomprehension, what the ego misrecognizes in the phobia is the proximity of an unconscious desire. Through a chain of associational displacements, an unconscious desire takes refuge behind the screen of the phobic object. In Lacan's view, far from being objectless, anxiety is activated exclusively by the presence of the object behind which a repressed drive representative lurks. One is terrified by a phobic object, not simply because of its disguised associations with the threat of castration, but because this object stimulates stifled, prohibited urges. The object provokes anxiety by stirring up repressed desires, and these desires threaten to disintegrate the fragile reality of the ego.

In this line of reasoning, the object of desire and the phobic object coincide in *objet petit a,*[44] in what Lacan also calls the "point of anxiety." Does the proximity of object *a* provoke anxiety because it is an object prohibited by the Law (object *a* as the object triggering a desire prohibited by a punitive paternal figure)? Regarding object *a* as the cause of desire, castration is itself a superfluous prohibition. That is to say, anxiety is not simply a displaced fear of castration. Object *a* is the always–already lost object of desire, a desire whose mantra is *ce n'est pas ça.* Put differently, desire is sustained by the constitutive absence of *das Ding.* The Imaginary substitutes for the lost Thing of *jouissance* are never quite "it," and thus desire must perpetually keep looking for an adequate replacement. (In Freudian parlance, Lacanian desire is the endless subliminatory effort to refind the missing object.) The Law merely makes it seem as if the Real Thing of drive is lost because of an external prohibition, thereby masking the *objet a* effect whereby *das Ding* is inevitably eclipsed by virtue of the internal dynamics of *Trieb.*

According to Lacan, the subject experiences anxiety at precisely those moments when it appears that the lost Real Thing of *jouissance* might actually be obtained. What is feared is the "lack of a lack," namely, the evaporation of the subject's desire through the closing of the gap separating the Imaginary object from the Real *Ding an sich*—"anxiety occurs not when the object-cause of desire is lacking; it is not the lack of the object that gives rise to anxiety but, on the contrary, the danger of our get-

ting too close to the object and thus losing the lack itself. Anxiety is brought on by the disappearance of desire" (Žižek 1991b, 8).[45] The phobia marks that point at which desire fears its own disappearance in the approach towards the smothering overproximity of the *jouissance*-laden Thing:

> I teach you to locate desire, to link it to the function of the cut, to put it in a certain relation with the function of the remainder. This remainder is what sustains it, what animates it and it is what we learn to locate in the analytic function of the partial object.
>
> Nevertheless the lack to which satisfaction is linked is a different thing. This distance between the locus of the lack in its relationship to desire as structured by the phantasy, by the vacillation of the subject in his relationship to the partial object, this non-coincidence between the lack that is involved and the function of desire, as I might say, in act, is what creates anxiety, and anxiety alone finds itself aiming at the truth of this lack. This is why at every level, at every stage of the structuring of desire, if we wish to understand what is involved in this function of desire, we ought to locate what I will call the anxiety point (*le point d'angoisse*). (*SX,* 5/15/63)

If anxiety is, as Freud situates it, a signal, it signals to the Imaginary ego the nearness of the misrecognized Real.[46] Borrowing a term from Ernest Jones, anxiety is a fear of "*aphanasis*" as the fading of desire. Two questions remain for a Lacanian theory of anxiety to answer: Why does Freud invariably uncover a fear of paternal prohibition behind the various manifestations of neurotic anxiety? And, what is so terrifying about re-finding the lost Thing of the drives?

The inherent antagonism of the split *Trieb* is projected outward onto the supposedly external reality of the subject. Although no drive is ever capable of achieving the aim of complete satisfaction, assigning the blame for this shortcoming of the libidinal economy to a prohibitory agency (the paternal figure, a suppressive society, and so on) permits sustaining a somewhat comforting belief in the hypothetical possibility of completely satisfying and thereby quelling the drives. A fundamental unconscious fantasy tied to the organization of the drives is the conviction that the conflict between the two axes of *Trieb* is potentially reconcilable. As a result, anxiety (more specifically, Freudian castration anxiety) is the unavoidable price that the ego must pay in order to maintain intact fantasies of full *jouissance*. How is this so?

In the 1937 paper "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," Freud

proclaims castration to be the "bedrock" of every analysis.[47] He speaks of it as a biological limit to the psychical sphere—that is, "castration" literally means the absence of a penis for women and the fear of losing their genitals for men. The later Freud utterly fails to grasp the general import of castration as part of the Oedipal mythology of the drives. In other words, he misconceives castration as ultimately being a simple matter of human anatomy, and not a metaphor for the separation required between the drives and their archaic object-choices. If castration is properly understood as the "cut" rendering *das Ding* inaccessible for *Trieb*, then comprehending full *jouissance* as a fundamental fantasy hiding the real failure of all drives permits a new understanding of castration anxiety as the so-called bedrock of analysis.

In Lacan's distinction between "*jouissance* expected" and "*jouissance* obtained," the former is defined as a tantalizing enjoyment yet-to-come, while the latter is the disappointing and disgusting sensation actually seized. In order for *jouissance* to retain its attractive allure, it mustn't come too close. If one really gets what one thinks is wanted, the thing obtained is no longer "it." The Kantian sensualist who succeeds in living out his drives and accepting the sex-for-death exchange is likely faced with the most horrifying anxiety once he realizes, while engaged in copulation, that the expected enjoyment of sex with the woman doesn't coincide with the enjoyment of the act itself. ("The deal wasn't worth it! It sounded good at the time, but now . . .") This is precisely what is at issue in Lacan's description of anxiety as the overproximity of the object of desire. *Objet petit a* appears "sexy" when kept at a distance. (For example, the lady of the sensualist's dreams is most appealing when she is merely an object of visual fantasy, a sexual conquest he has not yet achieved in reality.) *Objet petit a* becomes repulsive and anxiety provoking when the distance sustaining the allure of the Imaginary dissipates in the approach to the Real Thing behind this façade—when *jouissance* expected is collapsed into being *jouissance* obtained. In a 1974 address given in Rome, Lacan describes anxiety as arising when the subject fears being collapsed back into the body—"Anxiety is precisely . . . the feeling that arises from this suspicion of being reduced to our own body" (Lacan 1975b, 199). Isn't this what is responsible for the anxiety of the sensualist busily fornicating under the shadow of the gallows? Doesn't the deal of sex-for-death no longer seem worth it when the man perceives the Real of sexual intercourse as an animalistic, mechanical activity, as a purely bodily affair?

When Lacan says that, "castration means that *jouissance* must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder of the Law of desire," this means that one can only "enjoy enjoyment" when enjoyment remains merely *jouissance* expected. The Law, by forbidding access to

*jouissance* obtained, guarantees that *jouissance* remains attractive so long as the *ce n'est pas ça* of desire is sustained by the inaccessibility of the Real Thing. Similarly, in the eighth seminar, Lacan proclaims that, "desire is a cure for anxiety" (*SVIII,* 434). In Lacan's perspective, anxiety results from the confrontation with the probability of actually obtaining *jouissance,* from the imminent prospect of the disappointing and traumatic living out of one's drives. Desire, insofar as it is created by the prohibition distancing the subject from the Things of his/her drives, protects the subject from anxiety. As long as the Real side of *objet a* is forbidden to the subject—as long as *jouissance* is always expected and never obtained—unfulfilled desire shields the subject from being smothered by anxiety. In Lacanian theory, castration is that which marks the crossroads between drive and desire; castration, as the Law prohibiting the enjoyment of the primary object-choices of the drives, inaugurates desire as that which is sustained through a lack of satisfaction. Hence, castration anxiety isn't a fear of having one's genitals snipped off by a punitive father. Nor, more generally, is it a fear in the face of a purely external danger. Castration anxiety is the negative affect resulting from the threatened collapse of the protective barriers and fantasmatic screens rendering *objet petit a* desirable qua unattainable.

Consequently, if castration anxiety is indeed an unsurpassable bedrock for psychoanalysis, this is not because men fear losing their "manhood" and women irrationally wish to possess a penis. Subjects insistently cling to the various forms of their own "castration"—these forms of castration amount to the multiplicity of impediments surrounding the fulfillment of the subjects' drives—so as to sustain the fundamental fantasy of absolute *jouissance,* that is, the belief in the possibility of a completely satisfying experience finally quelling the incessant clamoring of the drives. A primary manifestation of this fantasmatic foundation of the libidinal economy is the notion of the *jouissance* of the Other. In the drama of the Oedipus complex, the paternal figure is a "subject supposed to enjoy" (*sujet supposé jouir*). This figure, epitomized in Freud's myth of the primal father from *Totem and Taboo,* jealously guards his own enjoyment of the maternal figure. He thereby inadvertently convinces the child that he has access to a "forbidden fruit" variety of satisfaction. The child desires the mother as this forbidden fruit so long as the father stands between the desiring subject and the desired object. The catch here is that the mother is desirable exclusively on the condition of being inaccessible. If the child were actually to act out these incestuous impulses, she/he would be disgusted and horrified by the experience.

Hence, castration itself is not the source of anxiety. Rather, the dissolution of the barrier between *Trieb* and *das Ding,* a barrier represented

by castration, creates traumatic distress. To actually discover that the supposed *jouissance* of the paternal big Other is not what it seemed—that the semblance of *jouissance* is just a semblance[48]—is exactly what the neurotic, anxious individual protects himself/herself against.[49] In short, what the subject experiences anxiety over is not so much the "external" threat of retributions from the father of the Freudian Oedipal drama, but the "internal" threat of an uncompromising, perpetually insistent drive-source whose demands are impossible to meet. The castrating paternal figure is the initial point of attachment, in the *Umwelt* of reality, for the projection of the antagonism between the drive axes. Castration, as the primordial prohibition of the ostensibly sought "incestuous" enjoyment of the drives, relieves the subject of the unbearable burden of actually having to fail in the eternally doomed efforts to live out the demands of *Trieb,* namely, of having to discover that the endlessly sought "lost object" of the drives, once re-found, is not what it seemed while inaccessible. Or, put differently, the subject is relieved of the burden of realizing that the unmodified repetition of the past sought by the drive-sources is impossible.[50]

The Lacanian concept of the *sinthome* is again useful. In psychoanalysis, a symptom is usually some annoying or painful behavioral pattern that the analyst's interpretation is capable of dissipating. Once the analysand learns the unconscious reasons behind the symptom–effect, she/he is liberated from the pathology in question. In the twenty-third seminar (1975–1976), Lacan argues for the existence of symptomatic structures incapable of being therapeutically alleviated in the interests of the subject's well-being. Certain "symptoms," such as the Oedipus complex and the paternal figure, cannot be undone without thereby also destroying the very subject suffering from these same structures. Through recourse to the Borromean knot, Lacan describes the *sinthome* as a fourth ring guaranteeing the cohesion of the other three rings (the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary):

> The Borromean link must, then, be thought of as tetradic. The fourth term, it happens, is the *sinthome.* It is just as surely the Father, in as much as perversion means nothing other than 'turning to the father' (*version vers le père*), and that, in short, the Father is a symptom, or if you prefer, a *sinthome.* The ex-sistence of the symptom is implied by the very position, which supposes this enigmatic link between the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real . . .
>
> The Oedipus complex is this kind of symptom. It is entirely maintained by the fact that the Name-of-the-Father is also the Father of the name—which makes the symptom no less necessary. (*SXXIII,* 11/18/75)

In the standard version of the Borromean knot, three rings are connected so that, if one ring is broken, the other two are set free. Each ring is equally important to the cohesion of the whole knot. In the twenty-third seminar, Lacan constructs a Borromean knot consisting of four rings. The ring crucial to the cohesion of the other three—the R.S.I. components of the knot—is the *sinthome,* which Lacan symbolizes as Σ. If the *sinthome* is dissolved, then the entire knot breaks apart. More specifically, in the context of the preceding discussion, if the subject is "cured" of the *sinthome* qua Oedipal paternal figure, this subject itself is "undone," that is, the individual experiences what Lacan calls subjective destitution—"The symptom is an element sticking on as a kind of parasite and 'spoiling the game,' but if we annihilate it, things get even worse. We lose all we had, i.e., even the rest which was threatened but not yet destroyed by the symptom" (Žižek 1991c, 210).

These topological musings on the relation between subject and symptom supplement Lacan's motif of the forced choice between *Père ou pire.*[51] Similarly, the Lacanian neologism "*père-version*" encapsulates the posited rapport between the Oedipal paternal figure (that which prohibits the drives from obtaining their lost objects) and the concept of *sinthome.* The drives require the interference of an outside authority (*Père*). Without this interference, the reality of the subject's existence itself is in jeopardy (*ou pire*). Like a symptom, the paternal figure is involved in the unconscious formations constitutive of neuroses. But, as a *sinthome,* if this external impediment to the drives is removed, the subject is overwhelmed by anxiety. Žižek points out that the "or worse" alternative to the choice of paternal prohibition is *objet petit a*—"The Lacanian matheme for this 'worse' element which presents the only alternative to the 'bad' choice of the Father is namely *objet petit a:* '*le père ou pire*' ultimately amounts to the alternative 'Father or the *objet petit a*'" (Žižek 1992a, 76). And, object *a* also functions as the *point d'angoisse.* The choice between "father" and "or worse" thus reduces to an alternative between low-level discontent (the instinctual renunciation required by the civilizing Oedipus complex) and intense anxiety (the horrifying trauma of living out the drives), respectively. The father is a *sinthome* that interferes with the subject's enjoyment; he forces the subject to relate to *jouissance* as lost, as a merely expected possibility always yet-to-come. However, without this interference—if the fourth ring Σ is broken—the structures supporting the subject come apart.

In more concrete terms, if the subject is led to a confrontation with the true object of desire beyond the façade of Oedipalizing Law, then this subject is crushed by an excessive amount of traumatic anxiety. The de-

sirable aspect of expected, "incestuous" *jouissance,* if actually obtained through the elimination of the paternal figure as an external prohibition, is immediately transformed into a disgusting, anxiety-laden experience. Actually copulating with one's mother would be one of the most horrific ordeals possible for an individual—one would feel, so to speak, smothered. The unconscious fundamental fantasy of full *jouissance,* protecting the subject from the Real of the antagonism between the drive axes, needs *le Père* to sustain itself.[52] *Père-version* means precisely that the reality principle, as what seemingly opposes the satisfaction of the drives, is, in fact, the desired "perversion" of the subject's libidinal economy—"perversion is the essence of man" (*SXXIII,* 5/11/76).[53] The Oedipus complex is a *sinthome* of the unconscious's efforts to cope with the inherent deadlock of *Trieb.*

Considerations such as these lead Lacan to contradict Dostoevsky's "If God is dead, then everything is permitted." Lacan claims that, "If God is dead, then nothing is permitted."[54] Similarly, Laplanche speaks of the "anxiety of my freedom" as an accurate description of anxiety as the "other side of my desire."[55] In other words, if the barriers to enjoyment maintained by the reality principle qua *Umwelt* were to be lifted—the psychoanalytic "death of God" amounts to the demise of the supreme, divine embodiment of paternal prohibitory authority—the entire libidinal economy of the subject would grind to a traumatic halt. Desire, as that which is sustained by the absence of satisfaction and is thereby complicit with the Law, would immediately evaporate.[56] All that would be left are the drives themselves. Without the neurotic support offered by external regulation (God, father, and so on), the fantasy of possible *jouissance,* whereby the unconscious protects itself from the threat of the ferocious, ravenous aspect of *Trieb* (the drive-source as epitomized by the *Todestrieb*), would be destroyed by the inability to actualize the satisfaction demanded by the drive-source. To sustain the illusory idea that God's (anticipated) death permits everything, God must never actually be allowed to die. That is to say, in order to cope with the drives, the unconscious forges an alliance with reality as its ostensible enemy—it strikes a deal with its prohibitory *Umwelt.* Caught within a triad consisting of the drives, the unconscious, and reality, the ego bears the weight of anxiety as a negative affect. It unknowingly pays the price for an elaborate dynamic whereby the internal danger of the split forever subverting *Trieb* is veiled through an externalizing projection. The ego, as the seat of anxiety, is the unwitting victim of a covert pact between two supposedly hostile forces—the pleasure principle of the unconscious and the external impediments of reality. The unconscious strikes its bargain with reality in exchange for partially eluding the drive-sources of the id.

## §29 Cyclical Temporality—The Ethics of the Drive

The axis of iteration is composed of the parallel operations of both the source and pressure of *Trieb.* Source and pressure together constitute a cyclical, repetitious (a)temporality of *Trieb,* which Freud describes as the "constant force" of drives. Nonetheless, this picture is too simple. If drive-pressure is conceived of as anxiety, then things are more complicated. It would be better to say that anxiety is the by-product of the irreconcilable conflict between the iterated insistence of the drive-source and the axis of alteration (wherein this insistence is mediated). For multiple reasons, no aim or object of *Trieb* is ever capable of answering to the demands of the drive-source for an "eternal return of the same satisfaction." Despite this innate incapacity of the axis of alteration to adequately respond to the insistence on a pure repetition of an always–already lost past, the drive-source tirelessly continues to reiterate its demand. Anxiety is produced by the simultaneous impossibility of gratifying the drive-source coupled with the refusal of the drive-source to acknowledge this limit. The latter factor is what leads Freud to portray drives as internal aggressors, as demonic compulsions capable of overriding the homeostatic balance of the pleasure principle and thereby threatening to destroy the ego.

At this point, one might wonder why this project emphasizes the centrality of temporality in understanding the drives. Isn't the strife between the subject's libidinal economy and the workings of the sociosymbolic order surrounding the subject what all this is really about? Hasn't the majority of the discussion here been centered on concepts like the Oedipus complex, castration, and the *Nom-du-Père*? Aren't these conceptual motifs the familiar repertoire of both Freudian and Lacanian theory? What is crucial to perceive is that without a grasp of the ahistorical, metapsychologically innate incompatibility between the temporal structuration of each drive axis, much of psychoanalysis appears to be nothing more than a historically contingent, empirical description of the human individual. One ends up with either the dubious Freudian pseudohistory of civilization as a specious explanation for the dissatisfaction of the drives or a quasi-Lacanian attempt to treat as transcendental the contingent features of the sociohistorical symbolic order. In either case, critics are justified in making the observation that psychoanalysis risks serving as a pessimistic rationalization of unnecessary forms of human suffering. The entire theory of *Trieb* as involving a "discontent prior to civilization," as well as the consequences stemming from the posited existence of a fundamental fantasy of "*jouissance* expected" as a defense against the split drive, hinges on the differences in temporal structuration between the axis of iteration and the axis of alteration.

A greater clarity regarding the temporal nature of the axis of iteration can be achieved through a comparison of Kant's categorical imperative with Nietzsche's notion of eternal recurrence. At first glance, these two philosophical themes might appear to be completely unrelated. What does Kant's ethics of pure practical reason have to do with Nietzsche's ambiguous, poetically expressed theme of the eternal return of the same? Arguably, the latter is a precise inversion of the former. Nietzsche's eternal return is the inverted, mirrored correlate of the imperative forming the cornerstone of the Kantian metaphysics of morals.

In Kant's practical philosophy, the will of the subject can be determined by either of two possible poles—inclination or law. The former term designates everything in human nature that, according to Kant, is "pathological"—instincts, desires, urges, whims, and so on. Inclination refers, moreover, to all that is empirically conditioned in human intentionality. (Desire is always a desire for a specific entity or innerworldly state of affairs whose desirability is dependent on the subject's particular sensibilities.) If one reaches an adequate understanding of how inclination influences the behavior of individuals, then one has constructed a descriptive anthropology and/or psychology of human activity in a given status quo. But, Kant claims that this descriptive analysis of inclination is neither a properly philosophical matter nor the foundation for an ethics per se. Ethics is concerned not with how people do act, but with how they should act. Furthermore, Kant insists that a prescriptive ethics centered on the injunction of "Should!"—in contrast with descriptive observations of actual-yet-contingent empirical instances of behavior—is inherently universal. Any truly ethical law is obligatory not just for all human beings as physical and psychological creatures influenced by instinct and inclination—duty involves the obligation, entailed by moral law, for human beings as rational subjects to surmount their physical and psychological characteristics[57]—but for all rational creatures in general.

The distinction between noumenal and phenomenal subjectivity is at play in Kant's ethics, although in a different way than in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The phenomenal subject, from the standpoint of the metaphysics of morals, is the individual as a bundle of sensuous desires and contextual concerns. The phenomenal subject is governed by the particularity of an intentionality that is influenced by determinate objects and empirical states of affairs. The noumenal subject, by contrast, is that part of the human individual that transcends the conditioned/conditioning automatism of phenomenal, pathological inclination. This dimension of subjectivity is reflected in the (potential) capacity of the subject to determine its will, not according to the contingencies of ever-changing urges and instincts, but according to laws recognized by universal reason as binding for all rational beings—and not just human beings, as a particular

embodiment of reason, in which reason (the noumenal subject) is juxtaposed with an "all too human" instinctual nature (the phenomenal subject).[58] For Kant, only the pure will of the noumenal subject can qualify as ethical, as unconditionally good in and of itself.

Kant is thus led to formulate the categorical imperative as the standard against which the goodness of any action and/or maxim must be measured: "I am never to act otherwise than so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law." If ethics per se is indeed constituted on the basis of universal principles binding for all subjects, then, of course, anything tainted by the pathological stain of inclination must be prevented from playing a normative role in constructing the metaphysics of morals.[59] The particular desires of the phenomenal subject must be suspended both in the shaping of volition regarding specific actions as well as in the articulation of obligatory ethicomoral precepts. Therefore, the distilled essence of Kantian ethics is the elimination of subjective particularity in both theory and practice. (One of Kant's justifications for the categorical imperative is that it is actually impossible to universalize subjective inclinations as laws, since these inclinations, as particular, empirical desires, are destroyed in the very process of universalization.)[60] In judging the moral worth of any action, this ethics forcefully ignores the idiosyncratic interests of the individual, the exigencies of particular contextual circumstances, and the possible consequences conditioned by the action. The a priori formal aspect of ethicomoral laws as universal must predominate over the a posteriori material nature of the specific circumstances and objects to which the law applies.[61]

Nietzsche's conception of morality is diametrically opposed to the Kantian conception. *The Genealogy of Morals* argues that ethical notions are the residual, overdetermined epiphenomena of brute historical power struggles. There is no universal, absolute value inherent within such notions. Their "moral" appearance is a deceptive façade behind which the historical investigator discovers the senseless conflicts of socioideological groups struggling for supremacy. In this light, Nietzsche views Kantian ethics as a "sickness," a symptom of Christianity's "slave morality." Slave morality results from the *ressentiment* of weaker groups which, through a sleight of hand, transform the necessity of their weakness into a virtue; the subjugated group promotes a Christian-style morality wherein the strong and powerful are condemned as wicked while the helpless and powerless are praised as virtuous.[62] For Nietzsche, Kant's understanding of practical reason is a deceptively ahistorical rationalization of historically precipitated ethical values:

> A word against Kant as *moralist*. A virtue has to be *our* invention, *our* most personal defense and necessity: in any other sense it is merely a danger.

> What does not condition our life *harms* it: a virtue merely from a feeling of respect for the concept 'virtue,' as Kant desired it, is harmful. 'Virtue,' 'duty,' 'good in itself,' impersonal and universal—phantoms, expressions of decline, of the final exhaustion of life . . . The profoundest laws of preservation and growth demand the reverse of this: that each one of us should devise *his own* virtue, *his own* categorical imperative. A people perishes if it mistakes *its own* duty for the concept of duty in general. Nothing works more profound ruin than any 'impersonal' duty, any sacrifice to the Moloch of abstraction. (Nietzsche 1968, 131–132)

Nietzsche stringently rejects any ethics that demands the elision of particularity and individuality. Whereas Kant portrays all subjective inclinations as pathological, Nietzsche reverses this portrayal and asserts that the true illness to be cured is the Kantian–Christian desire to flee from the vital, Dionysian forces essential to human existence. Like the Christian who spends the entirety of his/her life anticipating satisfaction in an afterlife yet-to-come—the Christian tolerates self-denial through the belief in a deferred, heavenly reward—Kant's gaze is transfixed by a supersensible noumenal realm beyond the sphere of human concerns. Nietzsche's cure for this "sickness unto death," this ethically glossed hatred of life, is "that each one of us should devise *his own* virtue, *his own* categorical imperative." But, what would a subjectively particular categorical imperative look like? Isn't this a contradiction in terms?

Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence is, in part, an effort to formulate an inverted version of the Kantian categorical imperative. Kant's ethics demands that the subject completely renounce both the influences of empirical, circumstantial contingencies upon his/her actions as well as the impulses stemming from his/her instinctual urges and psychological desires. To act ethically is to suspend everything particular about oneself as a concrete desiring being in favor of the empty, formal abstraction of a universal law utterly unconcerned with the exigencies of the actual life-world. By contrast, eternal recurrence, as an imperative, would command that one should always act such that one's action, taken as a unique event precipitated by the particularity of one's inclination at that precise moment, should be immediately elevated to a universal principle—a universality depicted by Nietzsche in terms of the perpetual recurrence of the unique event. Instead of determining one's will according to whether or not one's action can be stripped of all its unique attributes so as to be universalizable as a moral law, Nietzsche envisions a "metaphysics of morals" wherein the most valued of actions are the ones most dictated by subjective desire. When one's desire for an action is so strong and powerful that one would infinitely will it to occur in all possible worlds again and again, then this action is of the highest worth.

These meager, cursory sketches of Kant and Nietzsche permit a better understanding of the nature of *Trieb* at the level of the axis of iteration. This drive axis resembles the Nietzschean imperative of eternal recurrence. The drive-source, as equivalent to Freud's repetition compulsion (*Wiederholungszwang*), is nothing more than the indefinitely reiterated insistence on the eternal return of the same form of satisfaction. The Lacanian interpretation of drive emphasizes that the representational elements recurring in the temporally unfolding series of libidinal object-choices originate in early experiences characterized by excessive amounts of intense affectivity and/or sensory stimulation (see Appendix B, §1). A "letter" or "unary trait," revealing the repetitive nature of *Trieb* operative across the temporal expanse of an entire series of object-choices, is metonymically detached from an initial experience of a specific mode of *jouissance*. This archaic encounter with enjoyment provides the defining features/marks that are thereafter sought by the drives in subsequent contexts of the subject's lived history. The particular, contingent characteristics of a chance encounter (that is, a *tuché*) with *jouissance* are elevated to the status of being universal "ideals" against which the libidinal economy measures later object-choices. As with the normative aspect of Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence, the drive-source unhesitatingly promotes itself as an inclination, as well as its object (the empirical occurrence of an initial form of satisfaction) as a contingent particular, to the realm of universality. The drive-source relentlessly dictates that the originary moment in which it itself is coupled with its primary point of objectival attachment endlessly recur in all subsequent circumstances.

And yet, despite this Nietzschean coloring of the drive-source, its imperative to continually re-find its lost objects also involves a Kantian nuance. Kant distinguishes between a descriptive analysis of human ethical behavior (a psychology and/or anthropology of how people actually do act) and a prescriptive one (a metaphysics of morals that proclaims how people should behave, irrespective of how they do, in reality, act). The former tends to examine the inclinations influencing human actions. It offers insights into the subjective motivations, the role of contextual circumstances, and the significance of sociocultural elements as determining factors in the observable field of human behavior. The latter, on the other hand, issues its claims solely under the auspices of a "Should!" that dictates a permanent refusal to take into account concrete factors involved in human behavior. For Kant, it doesn't matter if anyone in reality actually determines his/her actions according to the categorical imperative. It isn't even very important if anyone potentially could, realistically speaking, consistently act exclusively under the governance of this imperative.[63]

In fact, Kant himself confesses that human beings can never fully es-

cape from the influences of inclination. The Kantian subject is always a dualistic subject, simultaneously composed of both a noumenal and a phenomenal dimension. Within the second *Critique*'s organization of concepts, the phenomenal subject is nothing other than a bundle of instincts, urges, and desires. This is the aspect of the human individual that is closer to animality than humanity, because, being under the sway of instinctual, desirous forces, the phenomenal subject lacks the freedom characterizing the noumenal subject. Through the ability to reflect and reason about the principles determining its action, the noumenal subject is capable of transcending the otherwise overdetermining powers of inclination. However, even in Kant's own texts, there is an admission that this transcendence is perhaps never definitively accomplished—"since man is acted on by so many inclinations that, though capable of the idea of a practical pure reason, he is not so easily able to make it effective *in concreto* in his life" (Kant 1949, 5). As such, the human subject is a priori guilty before the moral law. His/her inherent inability to surmount an intrinsic dimension of human nature by suspending all inclinations when determining his/her volition means that the demands of the categorical imperative cannot ever be fully satisfied. Even when one acts in a fashion consistent with the dictates of a given ethical law, this is not enough. One must have acted in that way strictly out of "pure respect" for the law, without any other inclination to do so.[64] Certain laws commented upon by Kant, such as the rule to preserve one's own life, can hardly ever be obeyed without an admixture of inclination; one cannot simply respect this law for its own sake, since one has a natural tendency to avoid death.[65] (Perhaps Nietzsche is right about the Kantian ethical hatred of life, since only a suicidal person could ethically obey the principle to preserve one's life by being obedient strictly out of respect for the law beyond any other inclination to obey.)

Similarly, the subject cannot ever fulfill the demands of the drive-source for an eternal, unmodified repetition/reinstantiation of the primordial Things necessarily lost via the mediation of the axis of alteration. In opposition to the Kantian imperative, the drive-source obeys the Nietzschean injunction to elevate one's particular, momentary desire to an absolute, universal position. But, ironically, once the drive-source selects a contingent feature of the psyche's prior form of enjoyment to function as an ideal template for subsequent satisfactions, the result is not an escape from painful renunciation into a Dionysian affirmation of life—the "hedonism" of the drive-source is far from being pleasurable for the psyche. Instead, the drive-source becomes just as harsh and uncompromising as the most stringent manifestations of Kantian ethical law. Every failure of the subject to fully gratify the axis of iteration—this failure is predetermined by the structurally innate discord of *Trieb*—results in the increased

insistence of the drive-source. (As with masochism, drives involve an "economic paradox.") *Trieb* thus appears as a parasitical taskmaster, depending upon the ego to carry out its orders while nonetheless rebuking the ego every time it falls short of the unreasonable expectations foisted upon it. This is the demonic, deathly side of drive. Its primary psychical manifestation is the super-ego.

In the second topography, Freud routinely discusses the intimate bond between the death drive and the super-ego. Although Freud understands the individual's super-ego to be the introjected version of originally external authority figures, he contends that this agency receives its powers directly from the id.[66] The super-ego often functions as "a pure culture of the death instinct." In other words, it serves as the primary conduit of discharge for the *Todestrieb*-like drive-source. For example, the severity of the melancholic's self-reproaches is an exaggerated, pathological version of the "turning round upon the self" innate to every subject's super-ego.

*Civilization and Its Discontents* makes abundantly clear that the super-ego is, in fact, one of the most effective sublimations of the drives. Something can function as a subliminatory outlet for a drive if it is not stigmatized or prohibited by external reality; typically, this means that sublimation is the process whereby the drive finds a socially acceptable path of discharge.[67] And, if a powerful drive is blocked from finding an alternate route to satisfaction in the individual's *Umwelt,* then this drive can turn against the psyche itself. (In "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," Freud identifies inversion qua turning back upon the self as a fundamental vicissitude of *Trieb.*) Thwarted drives lodge themselves in the introjected versions of early authority figures (the actors in the Oedipal drama) and use the mnemic traces of these figures—the "voice of conscience" is often the memory of a parent's voice—to sadistically torture the ego primarily through the arousal of a sense of guilt. The exercise of this pseudomoral violence against the ego provides otherwise frustrated drives with a substitutive satisfaction. Furthermore, this "moral masochism" is an effective means of sublimation precisely because it furthers the interests of society by guaranteeing the conformity of the subject's behavior to the prevailing norms transmitted through the family structure.[68]

In "The Economic Problem of Masochism," Freud draws an explicit comparison between the super-ego and the Kantian categorical imperative, calling Kant's moral law "the direct heir of the Oedipus complex."[69] Like the categorical imperative, the super-ego relentlessly commands the ego of the individual to emulate a set of ideal standards. Additionally, just as the Kantian subject is a priori guilty before the moral law, so too is the Freudian psyche unable to perfectly obey the super-ego. Why? Unlike external authority figures, who cannot gain immediate access to the hidden,

repressed desires harbored by the individual's unconscious, the super-ego, as an internal master, observes not only the individual's realized actions but also his/her unrealized intentions. The super-ego doesn't hesitate to punish the ego simply for wishing to do something forbidden. Žižek explains the connection between Kant and Freud:

> The stain of enjoyment that pertains to the Kantian categorical imperative is not difficult to discern: its very rigorist formalism assumes the tone of cruel, obscene 'neutrality.' Within the subject's psychic economy, the categorical imperative is experienced as an agency which bombards the subject with injunctions that are impossible to fulfil: it brooks no excuses ('You can because you must!') and observes with mocking, malevolent neutrality the subject's helpless struggle to live up to its 'crazy' demands, secretly enjoying his failure. The imperative's categorical demand goes against the subject's well-being—more precisely, it is totally indifferent to it: from the viewpoint of the 'pleasure principle' and its inherent prolongation, the 'reality principle,' the imperative is 'non-economical,' 'unaccountable,' senseless. The Freudian name for such an 'irrational' injunction which prevents the subject from acting appropriately to present circumstances and thus organizes his failure is, of course, *superego.* (Žižek 1991a, 232)

Žižek's description of the Freudian super-ego apropos the Kantian moral law helps bring into a greater degree of focus the intimate link between *Trieb* and super-ego. Like the *Todestrieb* qua drive-source, the super-ego operates beyond the pleasure principle; it pays no heed to the economic balance sheet of the pleasure principle, demanding, like the drives, "psychical work" even at the expense of the subject's physical and/or psychological health. Both the drives and the super-ego are uncompromising internal masters within the organization of the psyche.

Freud's own understanding of the essence of the super-ego, as well as the common conception of this agency, is that it behaves as an internalized prohibitory authority. The super-ego sadistically savors saying "No!" to the impulses of the id and ego, thereby internally discharging the more aggressive impulses of the libidinal economy. But, this leaves one with a puzzling paradox. Why would the libidinal economy choose to internalize a mechanism that thwarts its own desires? How could an id-dominated childhood psyche ever be goaded into establishing a means of libidinal self-regulation? Freud's explanation is, of course, that the destructive forces of the death drives, once impeded by reality and hence forced to reflexively double-back on the psyche, are responsible for the genesis and subsequent power of the super-ego. The death drives provide

the libidinal glue cementing the super-ego in place as a permanent part of the psychical topography. But, even if one accepts the problematic notion of *Todestrieb* as a drive category in and of itself, what about the other "erotic" drives besides the death drive? Are they simply powerless bystanders in the processes founding the super-ego? Are they passively subdued by a shared effort between *Thanatos* and the polis?

In his later work during the 1970s, Lacan offers a highly unorthodox recasting of the very nature of the super-ego. Instead of being primarily a voice of interdiction, incessantly forbidding the rest of the psyche from achieving various gratifications, the super-ego's imperative is "Enjoy!"[70] The Lacanian super-ego commands the subject to seek satisfaction and not to renounce its impulses—"Nothing forces anyone to enjoy (*jouir*) except the superego. The superego is the imperative of jouissance—Enjoy!" (*SXX,* 3). In developing Lacan's position here, Žižek alleges that the only thing of which one is guilty before the tribunal of the super-ego is having "given up one's desire."[71] Put differently, when the ego, operating according to the paradigm of the pleasure principle—and, by extension, the reality principle too—makes compromises with the circumstances of external reality so as to avoid certain forms of unpleasure, the super-ego inflicts its punishments. On one level, this makes sense: If the super-ego is a conduit for the drives as disguised via an introjected screen of external authority figures, then the ego's willingness to renounce *Trieb* so as to preserve its own well-being is a potential reason for the libidinal economy to utilize the super-ego so as to reprimand the ego for "selling out" the drives vis-à-vis the pact between the pleasure and reality principles. Nevertheless, between the "No!" of the Freudian super-ego and the "Enjoy!" of the Lacanian super-ego, there still exists an inadequately addressed tension. Is the super-ego an internalized Kantian voice of conscience enjoining the subject to an ever-greater adherence, in both action and intention, to the sociocultural norms prohibiting individual desires? Or, as Lacan seems to have it, is it a Nietzschean insistence on perpetual *jouissance,* the psychical pathway for an irrationally insistent drive-source tolerating no "pleasurable" compromises regarding its hedonistic demands?

Freud and Lacan are both correct in their characterizations of the super-ego. They each describe two sides of the same coin. However, further clarifications are necessary in order to perceive the compatibility of their positions beyond the initial appearance of contradiction. The super-ego is the agency giving virtually direct expression to the drive-sources. The id might indeed be the locus of origin for the drives, but the insistent manifestation of the drives—Freud asserts that all drives involve a demand for work, namely, that an essential aspect of *Trieb* is its constant leveling of injunctions against the rest of the psychical apparatus—reveals

itself through the mediation of the super-ego. Hence, *the earliest prototypes of the super-ego are not the parental figures of the Oedipus complex, but the drive-sources as internal dictators from which the nascent subject-to-be cannot flee.* The helpless infant, like the slightly older Oedipalized child, finds himself/herself confronted by greater powers, powers to which she/he must submit or perish. Freud mistakenly identifies the child's realization of its submissive position within the familial order as the first instance in which unavoidable demands of a seemingly omnipotent authority are encountered. Freud forgets that his explanations of the impotence of the young child in relation to the demands of its own drives represents a situation of subjugation to a threatening force commanding obedience, a situation preceding the Oedipus complex. ("Secure satisfaction for your drives, or else the tension, pain, and anxiety will only increase!") If, as Freud claims, the Kantian categorical imperative is the heir of the Oedipus complex, then *the Oedipal super-ego is the heir of the drive-sources.*

Consequently, prior to the traditional version of the Freudian prohibitive super-ego, the drive-sources function as a Lacanian super-ego. Their imperative is invariably the same: "Obtain enjoyment by always recovering the same form of satisfaction!" or "Endlessly re-find the initial object-choices!" The subjugated position of the infant before its own libidinal economy is thus the prototypical template foreshadowing the later Oedipal situation of the child before paternal authority. Therefore, the Lacanian super-ego qua "Enjoy!" is the first version of the super-ego, or, at least, a germinal version of the mature super-ego. (While familial structures are socially, culturally, and historically contingent, the super-ego, as an expression of the drive-sources inherent to all subjects, is not, despite appearances resulting from Freud's own accounts, a contingency, but, in actuality, a necessity.)[72] And yet, how does this "imperative of *jouissance*" become the Freudian super-ego? How is the command to "Enjoy!" transformed into the command to impede one's own impulses? A passage from Lacan's twentieth seminar hints at a possible answer to these questions:

> [T]he superego, which I qualified earlier as based on the (imperative) 'Enjoy!,' is a correlate of castration, the latter being the sign with which an avowal dresses itself up (*se pare*), the avowal that jouissance of the Other . . . is promoted only on the basis of infinity (*de l'infinitude*). I will say which infinity—that, no more and no less, based on Zeno's paradox. (*SXX,* 7–8)

What does Lacan mean by this reference to Zeno's paradox? In Zeno's paradox, the finish line infinitely recedes; one must traverse an endless

series of subdivisions of the given distance to be traversed. This is an allusion to desire in its relationship to *objet petit a,* since desire is perpetually impelled towards an object that infinitely distances itself. Desire is sustained through the impossibility of ever reaching the forever receding object *a.* Desire exists strictly within the space of Zeno's paradox: An unending series of Imaginary substitutes and Symbolic interdictions guarantees that the finish line qua Real Thing will never actually be crossed.

Lacan tends to associate *jouissance,* on the other hand, with drive and not desire. While desire is wholly intertwined with the fantasmatic threads of the Imaginary and Symbolic sides of *objet a, jouissance* is split into *jouissance* expected (that alluring version of enjoyment which is sustained, like desire, by a fantasy-screen deceptively enframing *das Ding*) and *jouissance* obtained (a horrible and traumatic traversing of the fantasy, a disgusting living out of the drives). *Jouissance* expected typically encodes itself in fantasies centered on the *jouissance* of the Other. ("Once certain external impediments are lifted, I can enjoy myself like all those lucky souls around me.") What's more, such fantasies, like fate neuroses, protect the subject from the truly crushing confrontation with the structural impossibility of ever being able to quell the ferocious injunctions of the drive-sources. An explanation is now possible as to why Lacan, in the previous quotation, refers to the "Enjoy!" of the super-ego as the "correlate of castration."

The prototype of the super-ego is the unconditional demand of the drive-sources for gratification. This demand is, in the general tenor of its enunciation, akin to the Kantian categorical imperative. It pays no heed either to the exigencies prevailing in given contexts of the subject's reality (the drives themselves do not care if empirical conditions in the individual's present environment aren't favorable to their demands—"You can because you must!") or weaknesses of the subject hampering its ability to answer the call of "libidinal duty" (it does not matter to the demonic drive-source if the demanded form of satisfaction goes so far as to risk killing the body of the subject). However, the content of the drive-source's imperative is much closer to Nietzsche than Kant. The source wills nothing except the indefinite reiteration of the earliest experience of enjoyment with which it's acquainted. The Nietzschean content of the source's injunction is that which is impossible to fulfill, that which ensures the subject's a priori guilt before the Lacanian super-ego. Insofar as the drive-source's compulsion to repeat is necessarily always–already routed through the axis of alteration, in which an unmodified repetition of the same form of satisfaction is inherently impossible, the ego can never completely live up to the command to "Enjoy!" Castration is therefore the means by which the ego attempts to elude the authority of the

Lacanian super-ego. The inability to gratify one's drives is, conveniently enough, the fault of a prohibitory *Umwelt* (the castrating father, the laws of one's society, and so on). One can blame one's shortcomings as regards *jouissance* upon outside impediments beyond one's control. Castration is the correlate of the obscene super-ego of *jouissance* to the extent that it inevitably serves as the alibi of a subject constitutively unable to answer the call to enjoyment.

The defensive strategy whereby the reality principle is employed as a scapegoat for the dissatisfaction of the drives—this strategy works to preserve the fundamental fantasy of full *jouissance*—actually transforms the nature of the super-ego. Although its primordial form is Lacanian, the super-ego becomes Freudian after castration anxiety is erected as a shield against confronting the traumatic impasse-situation in which alluring "enjoyment expected" can only be grasped as horrific "enjoyment obtained." Freud's portrayal of the super-ego as an internalized agency of interdiction holding the drives in check merely reflects a latent cognizance, on the part of the psyche, of the intrinsic deadlock of *Trieb.* By hindering the subject from acting-out its drives, the Freudian super-ego is complicit in encouraging the belief that, without the inconvenience of a guilty conscience, one could fully enjoy one's enjoyment. If one allowed oneself to follow completely the demands of the drive-source, the results would be devastatingly traumatic. The Freudian super-ego's "No!" to *Trieb* preserves the Lacanian super-ego's capacity for continuous insistence upon *jouissance.* The Lacanian super-ego demands *jouissance* so long as this enjoyment remains expected and not obtained—with Lacan, in the seventh seminar, observing that the prohibitory super-ego of *Civilization and Its Discontents* preserves *jouissance* by keeping it at a distance, on the hither side of the ethicomoral limits defining transgression.[73]

If the super-ego continued simply to insist upon enjoyment after the Oedipus complex, the subject would be at risk of shattering the fantasies rendering its lost Things desirable. The super-ego, in line with the unconscious's fantasmatic defenses against the unavoidable failure to satisfy the insatiable drive-sources—these defenses include a belief in the *jouissance* of the Other as well as the tactic of stubbornly blaming "castration" for one's lack of satisfaction—changes the content of its command: "Enjoy!" becomes "Renounce!"[74] As Lacan notes, "Even if the memories of familial suppression weren't true, they would have to be invented, and that is certainly done" (Lacan 1990a, 30). In other words, the libidinal economy generates the function of the Freudian super-ego as an additional insurance against the chance possibility that the subject might have to discover that, despite appearances to the contrary, giving in to the drives

does not finally provide the forbidden fruit of an uninhibited ecstasy. The shiny skin of forbidden fruit makes objects look appetizing when kept at a distance by prohibition. But, if the ego ever freed itself from the self-hindrance of the super-ego so as to taste this fruit, it would be disgusted to find itself biting into something that is rotten to the core.

10

# The Axis of Alteration (A–O)

## §30 Ideational Traces—Freudian *Vorstellungen* and Lacanian Signifiers

Despite the formidable size of his oeuvre, spanning a period from 1932 to 1980, Lacan is frequently summarized with reference to a single statement: "The unconscious is structured like a language." Both critics and disciples of Lacanian thought usually assert that Lacan's primary theoretical contribution consists of a linguistic turn wherein the energetic, libidinal unconscious of Freud is transformed into a formalizable, representational structure. To some, this "linguistification" of the unconscious amounts to a necessary overcoming of Freud's inappropriate reliance upon nineteenth-century biology and physics. To others who are less sympathetic, Lacan's claim to be the sole initiator of an orthodox "return to Freud" is refuted by his misguided effort to reformulate Freudian metapsychology within the parameters of Saussurian structural linguistics, an effort supposedly foreign to Freud's own vision of the psyche. Moreover, the objection that any endeavor to reassess the metapsychological fundaments of the libidinal economy with Lacanian tools must overcome is the contention that Lacan's depiction of the Symbolic unconscious is one in which the only substance at stake is language, namely, the charge that the theory of the signifier is unrelated to the question of drive. If, for Lacan, *jouissance* is always *joui-sens* (enjoyment is always enjoymeant),[1] then the logic and dynamics of signifying chains must be reassessed in a way that makes possible the delineation of the (non)rapport between "*joui*" (the axis of iteration) and "*sens*" (the axis of alteration).

When Lacan invokes linguistics, he almost always utilizes Saussure's terminology. In particular, the Lacanian unconscious is composed of (or, is "structured like") "signifiers." Opponents of Lacan claim that his posi-

tion is incompatible with Freudian theory; in distinguishing between "word-presentations" (*Wortvorstellungen*) and "thing-presentations" (*Sachvorstellungen*), the unconscious consisting of the latter alone, Freud denies the notion that the unconscious contains linguistic units of any sort. Resolving the debates between the defenders and detractors of Lacanian theory's references to structural linguistics requires answering two central questions. First, are the terms "signifier" and "word-presentation" synonymous? Second, is the structure revealed by linguistics itself entirely linguistic, that is to say, is "structure" strictly coextensive with language per se? The first question necessitates discussing several topics—the Freudian understanding of the place of language in the psyche, the relation between Freud's view of language and that of Saussure, and, finally, Roman Jakobson's modifications of Saussure as the source of Lacan's conception of the signifier. The second question prompts an examination of a series of distinctions drawn by Lacan during the later "post-structuralist" period of his teaching (mainly in the 1970s), in particular, the difference between *la langue* and *le langage* (both are translated into English as "language") as well as that between *sens* ("meaning") and *signifiance* ("signifier-ness").

Freud sometimes entertains a relatively simple conception of language: Language, understood by Freud in the ordinary sense of the term, is a body of words used in referring to a nonlinguistic sphere of things (objects, events, and so on). In line with this conception, Freud utilizes a distinction between thing-presentation and word-presentation; as presentations, both of these concepts refer to mnemic traces within the psyche. Thing-presentations are primarily visual, experiential elements retained by the mental apparatus, while word-presentations entail acoustic and/or graphic traces of specifically linguistic units.[2]

According to Freud, the unconscious retains only thing-presentations, that is, perceptual rather than linguistic traces. Hence, below the barrier of repression, one supposedly finds, primarily, fragments of visually inscribed memories.[3] Furthermore, Freud contends that a precondition for a thing-presentation achieving conscious status is that it gets coupled with a corresponding word-presentation. In this circumstance, the preconscious acts as a gateway between the unconscious and the restricted realm of consciousness. The preconscious is the psychical locale wherein thing-presentations coming from the unconscious receive the linguistic stamp permitting them potential entry into consciousness.[4] If, due to the censorship of repression, the preconscious fails to provide a word-presentation for an unconscious thing-presentation, then the thing-presentation is condemned to remain unconscious.[5] Almost certainly, Freud bases his assertion concerning the distinctively linguistic nature of consciousness on relatively straightforward self-observation; he notices that the internal

monologue accompanying all one's conscious states invariably seems to involve language. Starting from this, Freud presumes that a prerequisite for an idea entering the field of conscious thought is that it be escorted by its appropriate linguistic correlate.

However, Freud does not associate thing-presentations solely with the unconscious. Conscious thought involves both types of presentations. What would this mean in the Saussurian terms employed by Lacan? Like Freud, Saussure separates the representational building blocks of human cognitive processes into two categories—perceptual traces associated with primarily visual representations of objects (Saussure's "signified," similar to Freud's *Sachvorstellung*) and perceptual traces of linguistic units, whether acoustic or graphic (Saussure's "signifier," similar to, but not identical with, Freud's *Wortvorstellung*). Signifiers and signifieds alone do not have any meaning in the strict sense; only the combination of the two halves into a "sign" creates linguistic significance.[6] Thus, for both Freud and Saussure, conscious thought involves signs, that is, unifications of words and things according to the arbitrary but conventional practices of given communities of language-users. At this initial level of impressions, the validity of Lacan's importation of structural linguistics into psychoanalytic theory is somewhat questionable. On the one hand, Freud's theory of repression as expressed through the dichotomy between word- and thing-presentations vindicates Lacan's emphasis on the centrality of language in psychoanalysis. But, on the other hand, the similarities between the Saussurian signifier (the "sound-image") and the Freudian word-presentation leave Lacan vulnerable to the criticism that he reduces the unconscious to a mere jumble of words, thus turning his back on the Freudian model of the psyche.

Lacan introduces certain modifications into the Saussurian theory of the sign. First, he loosens the bond between signifier and signified, a bond that Saussure presumes to be inevitable and enduring within linguistic communities. According to Saussure, all (meaningful) uses of language entail a simultaneous mobilization of both signifiers and signifieds. Each signifier–word constituting a given uttered sentence immediately carries with it its appropriate signified–concept. (And, there is a fixed, one-to-one correspondence between these two types of units.) In focusing on the "diachrony of the signifying chain," Lacan maintains that the signifier, once seen in its actualized temporal deployment, does not automatically carry with it a parallel, predetermined signified. (For Lacan, signifiers are always situated in "chains," namely, diachronic sequences involving at least two signifiers.)[7] Using an extremely simple example, in the sentence "I am x," the signifier "I" doesn't receive its full descriptive signified until the period qua punctuation point indicates that the diachroni-

cally subsequent "x" (the sentential predicate) should be taken as retroactively hooking a signified onto the initially indeterminate signifier in the diachronically prior subject-position of the sentence. The "I" is (in Lacanese) a "floating signifier," bereft of a signified until the hooking operation of the retroactive *point de capiton* fixes one onto it. Later sentential employments of this "I" can further modify it by adding or subtracting signifieds. (One should note that Lacan's 1950s theory of the diachrony of the signifying chain foreshadows Derrida's concept of "*différance*" as simultaneously differing and deferral,[8] since both Lacan and Derrida stress the diachronic dimension of Saussurian theory along with its notion of synchronic differentiation.) Additionally, Lacan observes that various literary and rhetorical devices exhibit the amazing degree of human languages to survive radical alterations of the conventional relations between signifiers and signifieds while still retaining a capacity for transmitting significance to other speakers of the language. Consequently, for Lacan, signifiers obey a functional dynamic whose laws are relatively independent of the realm of signifieds. In emphasizing the separation marked by the bar between signifier and signified, Lacan contests Saussure's grounding of linguistics on the sign.[9]

Before proceeding further, it should be noted that Lacan's departure from the Saussurian centrality of the sign is not merely his own deviant, Freudian-inspired reading of Saussure. Roman Jakobson, the linguist Lacan relies upon most in his appropriation of Saussure, argues that the minimal unit serving as the possibility condition for producing effects of significance in language is the phoneme. A limited number of oppositional pairs of differing sound-traits generate a finite set of phonemic elements, and these phonemes themselves provide the originary foundation necessary for constructing more comlex signifying units.[10] Without the sonorous and/or graphical differences generated by the combinations of these phonemic atoms into larger aggregates, the ability for language to signify a diverse multiplicity of concepts and entities would not be possible. Unlike Saussure, who begins and ends his analysis of language with the correspondence between word–signifiers and concept–signifieds—Saussure goes so far as to suggest that only signs have any linguistic reality, with signifiers and signifieds being convenient theoretical abstractions lacking any independent existence or status[11]—Jakobson traces the origins of meaning to a meaningless substratum of oppositional pairs of phonemic sound-units. These, according to Jakobson, are the true "signifiers." He views words as necessarily meaningful signs. In Jakobson's eyes, a word is always and invariably connected with its signified meaning—another structural linguist loosely associated with Lacanian thought, Emile Benveniste, makes a similar point in stressing the mental inseparability of

signifier and signified[12]—and therefore is not a suitable candidate for the status of signifier, the signifier being that which is separable from the level of the signified.

One of Saussure's most well known contentions in the *Course in General Linguistics* is that the role of "difference" is an irreducible feature of language. (Due to Barthes, Derrida, Lacan, and others, this particular thesis has become the notion most readily associated with Saussure's thought.) For Saussure, the differences between signifiers enable a language to identify, organize, and represent a multiplicity of objects and concepts in the perceptual and cognitive reality of the speaking subject. Jakobson's grounding of structural linguistics on an analysis of the differential features pertaining to phonemes (and not words) is licensed by a single, elementary question: What makes possible the distinctions between words, namely, what enables there to be a plurality of words? Jakobson answers by claiming that, without a certain minimum number of phonemic differences, it would be impossible to construct a sufficiently large reservoir of vocabulary capable of the expressive richness seen in natural languages. Put differently, phonemic differences qua Jakobsonian signifiers permit the construction of word-level differences qua Saussurian signifiers. The greater the quantity of signifiers created through the combinatory permutations made available by the sets of phonemes and words, the greater is language's capacity to, as Lacan might put it, carve up the Real (that is, to identify and represent extralinguistic referents). Overall, what Jakobson retains from Saussure is the idea that the role of difference as essential to the generation of meaning inverts the understanding of individual linguistic units from a positive to a negative one—"a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*" (Saussure 1966, 120).[13]

In short, the Jakobsonian signifier is defined by two characteristics: One, the signifier, although a necessary precondition for meaning, is nonetheless meaningless in and of itself; two, the signifier is a function supported by a network of differences, not an inert, positive material.[14] This is the way in which Lacan understands the notion of signifier. Sharing Saussure's implicit bias that, in mental life, what is linguistic is usually meaningful, Freud considers the linguistic elements found within the psyche to be meaningful signs. However, if "signifier" is understood in the Jakobsonian sense, then it is not necessarily equivalent to Freud's *Wortvorstellung*. Lacan's logic of the signifier is meant to encompass both word- and thing-presentations—"the *Vorstellungen* have right from the beginning the character of a signifying structure" (*SVII,* 138).[15] This logic governs not only the speech of the subject—the positional articulations of

the *parlêtre*—but also his/her experiential memories and libidinal object-choices. Consequently, Lacan treats word-presentations merely as a subspecies under the larger category of signifying presentations.

Paul Ricoeur's primary critique of Lacan, a critique with many echoes today, is that the Freudian unconscious does not contain word-presentations. (Jean Laplanche, as well as other authors, also indulges himself in this angle of attack,[16] although he places the bulk of his critical emphasis on the Lacanian notion of structure.) In *Freud and Philosophy,* Ricoeur remarks:

> It is not without reason that Freud does not take language [*le langage*] into consideration when he treats of the unconscious but rather restricts its role to the preconscious and the conscious. The signifying factor [*le signifiant*] which he finds in the unconscious and which he calls the 'instinctual representative' (ideational or affective) is of the order of images . . . The form by which an instinct reaches the psychism is called a 'representative' (*Repräsentant*); this is a signifying factor, but it is not yet linguistic. As for the 'presentation' properly so-called (*Vorstellung*), this is not, in its specific texture, of the order of language; it is a 'presentation of things,' not a 'presentation of words.' (Ricoeur 1970, 398)

Although he believes himself to be dealing a fatal blow to the Lacanian return to Freud, Ricoeur ignores the fact that Lacan's emphasis on the unconscious resides in the concept of structure, not in the notion of verbal language centered on the word. Lacan is careful never to assert that the unconscious is a matter of *discours,* that is, a collection of words and phrases used by the speaking subject in his/her conscious, everyday existence within a given linguistic community of similarly constituted interlocutors.[17] Ricoeur stipulates that, "The term 'linguistic' may be applied to the field of analysis on the condition that it is taken in a wide sense" (Ricoeur 1970, 396). Lacan wholeheartedly agrees with this, and uses the widening of the conceptual scope of the signifier to effectuate a recasting of Freud in light of a structuralism that, while historically discovered through linguistics, transcends the limits of a study centered on spoken and/or written languages alone.[18] In fact, one could see Lacan's reading of Saussure as a tacit demonstration that structural linguistics already harbors within itself, from its earliest inception, the essential resources for a general semiotics of representations both within and beyond language. As Louis Althusser aptly remarks, to accuse Lacan of reducing the unconscious to a set of words is to have entirely missed the point of the various projects (Lacan's, Althusser's, Barthes's, and so on) using structuralism as an overarching paradigm for the human sciences.[19]

Through recourse to Jakobson's modifications of Saussurian concepts, Lacan treats the signifier as both a meaningless element in itself as well as a material unit (the nature of the signifier's materiality being variable) defined solely through its differential relations with other such units. Responding to the criticism that, against Freud, he treats the unconscious as an aggregate of word-presentations, Lacan states, "I have never said that the unconscious was an assemblage of words, but that the unconscious is precisely structured" (Lacan 1970, 187). Why does the Jakobsonian version of linguistics extricate Lacan from the risk of transforming the Freudian unconscious into a crossword puzzle collection of words from the individual subject's maternal tongue? Given Jakobson's portrayal of phonemes as constitutive of linguistic significance, various material supports can function in this phonemic capacity. That is to say, the auditory traits of phonemes, or the very fact that phonemes are sounds produced by the human vocal apparatus, are relatively irrelevant to the manner in which they enable the creation of signifying systems. It is not their positive features at the level of what phonemes are as sounds and/or graphic marks that permits the construction of larger units utilized in signification. Hypothetically speaking, a different material medium, to the extent that it would mark a minimum number of recognizable differences, can support the meaning-effect of language. (Braille testifies to this, since someone who is blind can use the differences between tactile sensations to identify units of signification.) The acoustic, visual, or tactile nature of the Jakobsonian signifier is the variable material support for the system of differential function-relations immanent to this same material level. Hence, things that are normally considered nonlinguistic (for example, visual images) can behave as signifiers if their value is determined by a system of differences with other things of a similar nature—"The signifier is a formal rather than a descriptive category. What it designates hardly matters" (Nasio 1998, 20).[20] More specifically, a Freudian thing-presentation, once operative within an unconscious consisting of a multitude of such presentations interrelated with each other so as to mutually influence their relative psychical values, is a "signifier" in this Jakobsonian–Lacanian sense. When, for example, Laplanche equates the Lacanian signifier with "the verbal signifier," he is simply wrong, guilty of an all too common error in reading.[21] Lacan's notion of the unconscious signifier includes images and other nonlinguistic sensory fragments.[22]

A final remark about Jakobson's influence on Lacan merits mention. Jakobson seeks to demonstrate how linguistic meaning is produced out of the oppositions and combinations of a strictly meaningless substratum of phonemic building blocks. Strangely enough, a foundation of nonmeaning helps make possible the emergence of meaning. Similarly, when La-

can speaks of unconscious signifiers, he isn't proposing that the unconscious contains hidden meanings. On the contrary, the unconscious, retaining inscribed traces of the manner in which the primary processes continually buffet, disrupt, and reorganize the representations at play within the level of the secondary processes, modifies and juxtaposes ideational materials (sounds, images, and so on) with no concern whatsoever for whether or not the products of its activity are in any way meaningful. The laws of unconscious association (that is, Freud's primary processes) unfold according to connections arising between signifier-like elements on the basis of their "material" (rather than meaningful) qualities or features. Or, one could say, the unconscious ignores the difference between word- and thing-presentations, often treating word-presentations as if they were thing-presentations. Accordingly, Lacan distinguishes between *sens* (meaning) and *signifiance* (a neologism translated into English by Bruce Fink as "signifierness").[23] The former refers to meaning as that which is intersubjectively communicable by virtue of a commonly held vocabulary and a set of agreed upon grammatical rules for the formation of statements. The latter refers to the idiosyncratic web of associations, relations, and evocations reflecting the activities of the unconscious, activities not constrained by concerns over communicability or comprehensibility with reference to the consensus reality of a linguistic community. One could say that *sens* is intersubjective meaning, whereas *signifiance* is intrasubjective. Lacan considers *sens* to be the object of linguistics as a field of study. Psychoanalysis, in his eyes, ignores the conscious intentions of speakers to convey *sens*. (In Saussurian terms, this entails bracketing the signified portion of a speaker's articulated signs in an attempt to isolate the meaningless play of the "pure signifier.")[24] Analytic interpretation, rather than being a kind of depth psychological hermeneutics (as one might assume regarding a Freudian approach), must instead focus on a *signifiance* quietly at work within the surface textures of the discursive fabric woven by the subject.

Through an examination of the dissimilarities between the Freudian word-presentation and the Lacanian signifier, one is inexorably led to the related issue of what Lacan means by "structure." Addressing the plethora of misinterpretations spawned by his 1950s structuralist period, Lacan, in the twentieth seminar (1972–1973), clarifies what his structuralist mantra ("the unconscious is structured like a language") actually entails:

> You see that by still preserving this 'like' (*comme*), I am staying within the bounds of what I put forward when I say that the unconscious is structured *like* a language. I say *like* so as not to say—and I come back to this all the time—that the unconscious is structured *by* a language. (*SXX,* 48)

This "*comme*" is ignored by those arguing that Lacan limits the content of the unconscious to being exclusively verbal/linguistic in nature.[25] Later on in the twentieth seminar, Lacan states, "*Si l'inconscient est bien ce que je dis, d'être structuré comme un langage, c'est au niveau de la langue qu'il nous faut interroger cet Un*" (*SXX* [Fr.], 63). The original English translation of this sentence runs as follows—"If the unconscious is indeed what I say it is, as being structured like a language, then it is on the level of language that we must interrogate this One" (Lacan 1982a, 139). This translation elides a distinction vital to grasping why Lacan is not a structuralist in the sense of positing natural language as an ultimate systematic foundation—*la langue* versus *le langage. La langue* designates language in the more everyday sense, as the "tongue" which one speaks; *le langage* refers to the complex, dynamic process reigning amongst unconscious signifiers. (Simply put, *le langage* is not equivalent to language per se as defined solely by linguistics.) The elision of this distinction is largely responsible for the widely accepted textbook-style portrayal of Lacan as a linguistic structuralist. In other words, extant translations obscure the fact that Lacan does not say that the unconscious is structured "as" or "by" English, French, German, and so on. In response to an audience member's comment during his 1968 lecture at Johns Hopkins to this effect—"I think you said that the unconscious is the ordinary language, English, French, that we all speak"—Lacan curtly replies, "I said *like* language, French or English, etc." (Lacan 1970, 198).[26] *Le langage,* as used by Lacan, refers to a structural logic or ordered circuit of movement that, although discovered through and reflected within natural languages (*les langues*), cannot be considered as strictly coextensive with each of these languages.[27] For these reasons, the late Lacan distances himself from linguistics, a discipline that, in his earlier years, he had embraced as the "scientific" partner of psychoanalysis—"The fact that I say (*Mon dire*) that the unconscious is structured like a language is not part and parcel of the field of linguistics" (*SXX,* 15).[28]

Jean-Claude Milner appropriately notes that there is something redundant in the statement "the unconscious is structured like a language."[29] After the late Lacan's explicit broadening of the scope of the term "*langage,*" "language" and "structure" become virtually synonymous concepts. Hence, if he really wanted to distance himself from a linguistically dominated form of structuralism, Lacan would be better off simply claiming that, "the unconscious is structured." This truncated version of his famous claim succinctly and unambiguously continues to perform the task in light of which Lacan turns to linguistically inspired structuralism during the early phases of his teaching, namely, emphasizing that the unconscious is not the id, that the unconscious is not an anarchic hodge-

podge of vitalist instincts antithetical to every kind of ordering or patterning. In the later years of *le Séminaire* (a period Milner suggests calling Lacan's "hyperstructuralist" phase[30]), he has no genuine need for the "like a language" part. It seems that, during his theoretical revisions of the 1970s, Lacan retains it merely so as to sound consistent with his pronouncements of the 1950s. Why continue to refer to language at this point? Why retain a set of terms that have the disadvantage of constantly requiring clarification in the face of understandable misinterpretations? In his refusal to abandon the literal terminology of Saussure and Freud, despite the fact that he submits their concepts to radical modifications, Lacan is often his own worst enemy.

The relevance of the *langue–langage* distinction becomes apparent in examining the disagreement of Jean Laplanche with Lacan. Laplanche's main criticism of Lacanian structure is that placing an emphasis on this thematic depersonalizes analysis, which he views as a highly personal affair—"I don't believe in the unconscious of the language. I am not Lacanian in that. I don't think the unconscious is the latent possibilities of the language. I think everyone has his own unconscious; there is no interpersonal unconscious that would be the latent possibilities of the language" (Laplanche 1992c, 53). Laplanche conflates the Lacanian signifier with the verbal signifier of Saussurian linguistics. Departing from this erroneous conflation, he then asserts that the transindividual nature of language eclipses the idiosyncratic uniqueness of each analysand's psyche. At stake here is the very question of whether or not a structuralist-style treatment of the unconscious is capable of striking a balance between particularity and universality, between the subject and its surrounding frameworks of mediation. Laplanche states—"With a structuralism pushed to the extreme . . . the immanent element that one wants to substitute for the singularity of the unconscious is a trans-individual immanence: it's language (*le langage*), or more exactly language (*la langue*), in Saussure's sense" (Laplanche 1981b, 143). Laplanche specifies that *la langue* in Saussure's sense is precisely what overshadows the "singularity of the unconscious" to the extent that one's tongue is a transindividual order. Elsewhere, Laplanche remarks:

> [T]his Lacanian theory leads to privileging—in the practice of the cure—the 'trans-individual' aspects of verbal language . . . The unconscious of a language (*une langue*) would be its hidden treasure. It's evident that a language (*une langue*) has a hidden treasure of latent metaphors and metonymies: its infinite or indefinite plays on words, its puns and spoonerisms. Is everything that is in language equally in the unconscious? I would like to say just how much this so-called 'signifier' anal-

> ysis, grounded uniquely on the indefinite plays proposed by language (*la langue*), is, in my opinion, an arbitrary, savage analysis. (Laplanche 1987, 129–130)

Does Lacan's "the unconscious is structured like a language" lead to an "arbitrary," "savage" abuse of analysis, a haphazard playing with words? In claiming that dreams and symptoms are arranged similarly to, for example, metaphors and metonymies, is Lacan opening the door to a therapy in which the poetic caprices of the isolated analyst are tyrannically superimposed upon analysands without any rigor or constraints?

Implicit in the *langue–langage* distinction is a difference between the empirical content of analytic practice and the formal superstructure of analytic metapsychology, between psychoanalysis as therapy and as theory. Lacan attempts to assign each its appropriate place in his conceptual apparatus. Laplanche is utterly convinced that Lacan recognizes no difference between the general metapsychological claim that "the unconscious is structured like a *langage*" and the spoken tongue (*la langue*) in which an analysis of an individual subject is conducted. Lacan does indeed recognize a difference here: The metapsychological grounding of the unconscious vis-à-vis *langage*-like structure licenses a subsequent shift in analytic praxis wherein the discourse of the subject becomes the privileged focal point of interpretation. (However, this is far from ruling out examinations of nonverbal actions performed by analysands within the context of an ongoing analysis.) Freud's own distinction between *Sachvorstellung* and *Wortvorstellung* likewise licenses an orientation of analytic investigation primarily around the individual's speech: Repression is a verbal blockage, a point where a thing-presentation is denied links with corresponding word-presentations. Lacan notes that, "We can deal with the unconscious only on the basis of what is said, of what is said by the analysand" (*SXX,* 100). Lacan's focus on *la langue* qua the actual linguistic utterances of the speaking subject is thus principally a matter of clinical practice, an issue of the limited paths of access that the analyst has to the psychical states of his/her interlocutor. (But Lacan would also stress that, in many cases, since the analysand's "inner" mental intentions are supported by "external" mediation, by the delicate tissue of significations rendering subjective cognition "extimate," it is not as though the analyst should proceed as if listening to another's speech involves attempting to detect motivations or desires hidden somewhere "behind" the surfaces of articulation.) At the level of analytic praxis, Lacan simply underscores that Freudian psychoanalysis is indeed a "talking cure," and that the analyst must ground his/her interpretations on what the patient says. This is indicative of Lacan's epistemological sobriety (something that he is not usually ac-

cused of), of his sense of the limits of possible analytic experience. Does this mean, as Laplanche has it, that Lacan advocates analysts playing free-associational word games of their own as improvisations loosely based on what the analysand utters? Does Lacan's focus on the linguistic medium of analytic practice mean that he ignores the specificity of the individual subject in favor of a Jungian collective unconscious supported by a quasi-transcendent, transindividual symbolic order?

Laplanche's critique of Lacanian practice ultimately derives from his dismissal of its theoretical foundations. This is more a philosophical than a clinical disagreement. Laplanche indicates that the roots of Lacan's "perversions" of analysis lie in his fundamental concepts. However, in failing to notice the crucial distinction between *la langue* and *le langage,* his rejection of the "linguistic" unconscious as impersonal and abstract is not well founded. But, one might still be wondering, exactly how is *le langage* different from *la langue*? What changes in this shift from the linguistic speech of the analytic session—always conducted in a certain tongue spoken by analyst and analysand—to the structural "language" of the metapsychological unconscious? Whereas Lacan's emphasis on *la langue* specifies a particular content as the material to be interpreted in analytic practice, his use of *le langage* is strictly formal; no determinate type of content is thereby posited as the sole type of content to be found in the unconscious. Lacan's axiom doesn't say what the unconscious contains or what materials it consists of—virtually every critique of his "linguistics" misses this point—but rather that, whatever materials may be found in it, they take on their functions and mutually interact with each other according to a structured dynamic capable of precise theoretical delineation. *Le langage* designates a translinguistic structure, not an empirical content (that is, a particular set of natural languages).[31] Consequently, any type of mnemic materials (linguistic or nonlinguistic sounds, linguistic or nonlinguistic images, and so on) insofar as they are subjected to specific psychical processes (such as condensation, displacement, and the *point de capiton*), constitute nodes in the signifier-like networks of the unconscious.[32]

Furthermore, the contrasts that Laplanche invokes between the personal and the impersonal, the individual and the transindividual are, in fact, mirrored by the *langue–langage* distinction. Lacan employs *la langue* to refer to a preexistent linguistic system into which individual speakers are born. The words and grammatical rules of a tongue are part of a symbolic order, a transcendent domain of linguistic, sociocultural meanings external to the individual that she/he acquires in becoming a subject. *Le langage,* on the other hand, designates the mechanisms whereby a sedimentation of layers of subjective significance accumulates

as a result of the complex interactions between the symbolic order and the vicissitudes of the individual's lived history. *Le langage,* in contrast to *la langue,* is a process or movement, instead of a concrete collection of historically contingent materials. The Lacanian subject is neither purely a depersonalized puppet of the Symbolic big Other, nor a psychological atom capable of being theoretically isolated from the matrices of representation in which this subject is granted its existence.

In fact, there is striking evidence from Lacan's later teachings of an actual repudiation of his earlier structuralist articulations concerning the symbolic order. The seminars of the 1950s emphasize the importance of this transindividual order, this big Other whose mediation confers upon the individual both subjectivity and an unconscious. The multiplicity of horizontal intersubjective relationships is reified into a totality vertically hovering above this mere aggregate. Lacan repeats over and over again how the being of the particular subject is utterly dependent on this universal Other (during this period, Kojève's influence on Lacan is quite pronounced). But, surprisingly, as part of his "turn" in the 1960s, Lacan subsequently issues the cryptic proclamation that "*L'Autre n'existe pas*" ("The big Other does not exist").[33] What does this mean? Why does Lacan deny the existence of the big Other, the transcendent matrix of mediating representations that serves as the conceptual cornerstone for a structuralist recasting of the unconscious?

In the introduction to his "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right,*" Marx declares that, "The basis of irreligious criticism is this: *man makes religion;* religion does not make man."[34] As is well known, Marx's criticism of Hegel here resides in his diagnosis of *Geist* as a quasi-religious specter, an ideological phantasm that deceptively inverts the perceived relation between the particularity of concrete human beings and the macro-level currents of sociohistorical forces. (Briefly put, Marx accuses Hegel of asserting that history makes man, an assertion that Marx feels hides the fact that man makes history.) The appearance of *Geist* as an autonomous, reified "world spirit" is thus a symptom of the human subject's political and economic alienation.

Whereas the early Lacan is closer to Hegel (with his symbolic order as the "objective spirit" of psychical subjectivity), the later Lacan veers towards Marx. In stating that "The big Other does not exist," Lacan concedes that the notion of a transcendent system independent of the multiplicity of its constituent components (a notion dear to structuralism) is indeed somewhat deceptive.[35] At best, it serves as a convenient theoretical fiction. However, the specifically Lacanian twist is to argue that, from the subject's point of view, the apparent alterity of the representational mediators of its subjectivity is irreducible. (An interesting study could be written on the psychical centrality and persistence of all those "things" that La-

can, over the course of his itinerary, says are nonexistent—the big Other, the Woman, the phallus, the sexual relationship, up to and including *objet petit a*.) In short, for Lacan, the alienation of the subject is a necessary illusion, a condition constitutive of subjectivity itself.[36] That is to say, the psychoanalytic splitting of subjectivity precludes the possibility of overcoming alienation in this broader sense, as the gap between what Lacan calls the subject of enunciation and the subject of the utterance, namely, the gap resulting from the alienation of the subject in the "defiles of the signifier." (This gap's essence is nicely expressed by Jonathan Lear when he describes the Freudian unconscious as a consequence of the fact that human beings, in their mental "restlessness," produce more meaning than they know what to do with.)[37]

In the larger scheme of things, what are the ramifications of this reinterpretation of Lacan's peculiar brand of structuralism within the overarching context of twentieth-century European thought? Apart from the field of Lacanian theory itself, what is the importance of debunking the prevalent myth of the "linguistic Lacan"? Are the stakes limited to the psychoanalytic clinic, to the practice of analysis as a therapeutic intervention in the domain of the pathological unconscious? The details situated within the microcosm of particular issues surrounding Lacan's return to Freud contain windows opening out onto a macrocosmic perspective wherein contemporary philosophy situates itself in relation to its recent history; at stake are the very lines of demarcation tacitly maintained, in the intellectual status quo, between phenomenology, structuralism, and post-structuralism.

To begin with, Lacan—along with Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, Foucault, and Althusser—is a key representative of structuralism as a general method and research program in the human sciences. Although these thinkers are frequently grouped together under this heading, there are, naturally, crucial differences between them (as is the case with any set of interesting theorists housed together under the umbrella of a convenient label). However, out of this group of thinkers, Lévi-Strauss' notion of structure (*à la* the "elementary structures of kinship") is the one most often casually associated with structuralism as a movement: "Structure" designates a framework of sociocultural meanings, codes, and institutions superimposed upon the individual subject, a rigid external order secretly overdetermining conscious existence. And yet, if this superficial portrayal of structuralism is inapplicable to Lacan, then, perhaps, structuralism as a whole has been systematically misunderstood by its subsequent interpreters.

Similarly, Lacan, like Foucault, is a thinker whose own work participates in the shift from structuralism to post-structuralism. For instance, in his seventh seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959–1960), Lacan

initiates this transition in reconsidering the centrality he previously accorded to the Symbolic by emphasizing the importance of his ill-defined category of the Real. (Put briefly and inadequately, this amounts to asserting that closed signifying systems are affected by nonrepresentational conditions external to these systems.)[38] Typically, post-structuralism defines itself as distinct from structuralism in its devaluation of what it interprets to be the hegemonic centrality assigned to formally delineable language by structuralist theories (or, more generally, to a closed order of exhaustively defined elements). One of the best examples in the present context is Kristeva's presentation of her (as she puts it) "trans-linguistic" semiotics as a nuanced alternative to what is supposed to be Lacan's strictly linguistic analyses of the subject.[39] (Likewise, both Kristeva and Irigaray discuss the need to ostensibly go beyond Lacan in psychoanalytic practice by paying attention to things like bodily gestures and vocal intonations, assuming that Lacan ignores everything except the verbal text of the analysand's monologue.) However, if Lacan is shown to be a structuralist who doesn't deify language in the crude manner that critics of structuralism allege, then the dividing line between structuralism and post-structuralism (at least as drawn by post-structuralists) loses some of its sharpness.

The criticisms of Lacan's employment of linguistics as a "pilot science" for understanding the unconscious are closely linked to what could be termed an implicit neo-Bergsonianism at play in French thought beginning in the late 1960s. Ricoeur, Laplanche, Kristeva, Irigaray, Deleuze, and others all extol the virtues of Freud's energetic descriptions of the psyche. Lacan supposedly robs the unconscious of its vitality, its "energy" (libido, drive, affect, and so on). The fluid, fluctuating force of libidinal life is drained off from the Lacanian unconscious, which thereby becomes a dead, mechanistic automaton.[40] Like Bergson's distinction between the "durational *moi*" and the "spatial *moi*"[41]—Kristeva's "semiotic" versus "symbolic" (see Appendix B, §3) and Irigaray's "fluid" versus "solid" are both Bergsonesque dualisms leveled against Lacan—the seething cauldron of the id (a notion problematically imputed to Freud) is set up in opposition against the fixed, rigid organization of the structured unconscious.

The assertion that the price to be paid for a structuralist treatment of the unconscious is the loss of the ability to acknowledge and explain the libidinal mechanisms of psychical life is false. Freud himself specifies that drives contain both representational and nonrepresentational components. In particular, given that the Freudian drive-object is composed of perceptual mnemic elements, Lacan's logic of the signifier, cut loose from the moorings of Saussurian linguistics, is intended to account for object-choice, sublimation, and other libidinal mechanisms. A Lacanian

rebuttal of post-structuralism's invocation of an unstructured, anarchic id against the structured unconscious actually turns the tables on its critics: Considering that an integral aspect of the drives consists in interrelated networks of ideational traces forming the finely woven fabric of the unconscious, one cannot hope to apprehend the workings of the libidinal economy without something like the concept of the signifier. The choice between structure or energy, language or libido is a false dilemma resulting from not only a caricature of Lacan, but also from a fundamentally flawed reading of Freud (one that falls prey to the Freudian mythology of psychical energy and that additionally conflates the unconscious with the id). Part of Lacan's innovativeness resides in his ambitious attempt to overcome the philosophically suspect distinction between "representation" and "energy" underpinning much of Freud's thought: For Lacan, "psychical energy" (if not immediately dismissed as a lure for fanciful analytic picture thinking) does not exist apart from the ideational representations and mnemic traces registering the activities of the unconscious;[42] conversely but correlatively, these representations and traces are not stable, isolable atomic units, but, rather, moments caught in an ever-mobile diachronic flow (hence the temptation to resort to an energetics to metaphorically capture, in an image, the almost kinetic dynamics of signifying chains.)

Understanding the impact of the Lacanian signifier (as a formal function specifying the nature of Freudian representations [*Vorstellungen* as ideational traces]) on *Trieb* is crucial. For example, if drive-objects, which are usually conceived of as thingly representational elements mediating the source and pressure, are representations qua signifiers,[43] then what does this mean? Does this demand a reconception of *Trieb*? The logic of the signifier, which, in Lacan's account, entails its own form of temporality, represents a temporal order incompatible with that of the axis of iteration. The "signifiers" inevitably mediating the imperatives of the drive-source are responsible for a drifting/sliding effect wherein the past ideational traces sought after can never be recovered in an unmodified form within the constraints of the present.

## §31 "Your *da* or your *fort*!"—The Forced Choice of *Trieb*

Despite his own emphasis on the synchronic features of signifying systems, the most important consequence of Lacan's employment of the concept of the signifier is its tacit introduction of temporality into the Freudian un-

conscious. Freud's downplaying of temporality as a purely conscious affair of little importance to psychoanalysis is untenable. Picking up on the inconsistencies arising from the fact that Freud simultaneously alleges that the unconscious is timeless while nonetheless uncovering phenomena like screen memories and deferred action, Lacan generalizes the temporality of the signifier (namely, the *après-coup* of the *point de capiton*) for all unconscious elements:

> Psychoanalysis is . . . not concerned with the past 'as such,' in its factual purity, but in the way past events are included in the present, synchronous field of meaning . . .
>
> In short: the true, the past (long-forgotten traumatic encounters) does determine the present, but the very mode of this determining is *overdetermined* by the present synchronous symbolic network. If the trace of an old encounter all of a sudden begins to exert an impact, it is because the *present* symbolic universe of the subject is structured in a way that is susceptible to it. (Žižek 1991a, 202)

Although Žižek continues to identify Lacan's handling of the relationship between the past and the present as negotiated through the synchronous matrix of the ever-present symbolic order, one should notice that Lacan's logic of the signifier is closer to Derrida's partially temporal concept of *différance* than to Saussurian synchronic linguistics. In a "reading" of Saussure, Derrida stresses how the notion of the signifier simultaneously entails both spatio-synchronic difference (each signifier, at any point in time, takes on its value via the synchronous coexistence of the other signifiers constituting the given system, a system that is nonetheless not timelessly closed-in upon itself) and temporal-diachronous difference (what Derrida refers to as the "deferral" intrinsic to the signifier, since its final meaning is always *à venir*). Derrida's primary purpose in proposing this interpretation of Saussure is to further a critique of the "metaphysics of presence": The significance of language is not due to or epitomized by its function of "showing" beings through referential acts of speech pointing to nonlinguistic entities, but is the residual after-effect of an inherently unpresentable, mobile network of synchronic differences and diachronic deferrals.[44]

Analogously, one could say that Lacanian theory implies a critique of "libidinal presence" *à la* the notion of the existence of an obtainable, satisfying object of *Trieb*. Freud's claim that the drive-object is always a refound object is radicalized: *Objet petit a,* as the metapsychological form of all drive-objects, materializes the tension between that which is pursued as a past point of libidinal cathexis and that which is obtained as a present

entity occupying the place of this always-past Real Thing. The sociocultural phenomenon of instinctual renunciation isn't, as Freud sometimes indicates, an external barrier hindering an otherwise functional drive capable of attaining full satisfaction; as Lacan says, given that object *a* is the drive-object, "the object is a failure."[45] In the seventh seminar, Lacan provides a means of connecting the temporal nature of object *a* to his theory of the signifier:

> Let's say today that if the Thing occupies the place in the psychic constitution that Freud defined on the basis of the thematics of the pleasure principle, this is because the Thing is that which in the real, the primordial real, I will say, suffers from the signifier—and you should understand that it is a real that we do not yet have to limit, the real in its totality, both the real of the subject and the real he has to deal with as exterior to him. (*SVII,* 118)

Lacan continues:

> In effect, the first relation that is constituted in the subject in the psychic order, which is itself subject to homeostasis or the law of the pleasure principle, involves flocculation, the crystallization into signifying units . . .
>
> It is precisely in this field that we should situate something that Freud presents, on the other hand, as necessarily corresponding to the find itself, as necessarily being the *wiedergefundene* or refound object. Such is for Freud the fundamental definition of the object in its guiding function, the paradox of which I have already demonstrated, for it is not affirmed that this object was really lost. The object is by nature a refound object. That it was lost is a consequence of that—but after the fact. (*SVII,* 118)

Lacan rightfully notes that Freud does not exactly say that the drive-object is always–already a lost object, but that this object is a "refound" object. What does Lacan mean when he asserts that this re-finding is responsible for the loss of the object "after the fact"? Moreover, how is this re-finding of the object related to the Real Thing that "suffers from the signifier"? To say that an object is "refound" indicates, of course, that the act of finding the object is repeated. This is exactly what the axis of iteration demands, namely, a repetitious, constant, cyclical return to an initial point of attachment. Lacan's assertion is that this repetitious re-finding is self-subverting. The re-finding of an object is what retroactively renders the original (non)object (*das Ding*) inaccessible. Drive-objects are psychical

representations; as such, according to Lacan, they obey the logic of the signifier. Thus, the Real (the lost Thing of *jouissance*) "suffers from the signifier" to the extent that its loss is guaranteed by the repetition of the representation of *das Ding*, a repetition dictated by *Trieb* that inadvertently introduces the *point de capiton*'s retroactive alteration of the very past to be repeated. These assertions regarding the drive-object qua object *a* are supported by two lines of argumentation—a phenomenological account and a structural/logical one.

At the phenomenological level, each instance of re-finding confronts the genetic subject of psychoanalysis with a somewhat modified object. The breast as experienced at age two or three is, one could presume, quite a different kind of phenomenal object than as it was experienced in the first months of life. Lacan adds a further twist: A drive-object as an object per se—as a representable/represented coordinate of cathexis for the organized structure of *Trieb*—does not exist prior to the loss of this same (non)object qua *das Ding* of the Real. In the eleventh seminar, Lacan speaks of the *fort-da* ("gone"-"here") game of Freud's grandson (from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) as demonstrative of the "forced choice" inherent to *objet petit a:* "Your *da* or your *fort*!"[46] Like the money in "Your money or your life!," if one chooses *da* (the full presence of the Real Thing, the rejection of castration as the surrendering of the archaic drive-object, the refusal of passing through the defiles of the Oedipus complex), then one loses both the *jouissance* attached to *das Ding* (one is traumatically [s]mothered by the anxiety-provoking proximity of a psychotic *jouissance* always obtained) and the fantasy of *jouissance* expected supported by the intrinsic inaccessibility of the object of desire (*fort* as the absence of *das Ding*, as the distance necessary for creating the experience of the object as object per se).[47] Only in accepting loss—the "gone" [*fort*] of the primordial object-choice—is the libidinal economy of *Trieb* sustainable.

For Lacan, the more phenomenological account of the drive-object is secondary to the structural/logical explanation of the inevitability of object loss. The phenomenological account still adheres to a developmental model, wherein the evolution of the subject's mode of constituting objects of experience bars access to a regressive pathway directly returning the subject to the earliest mode of experiencing its primary drive-objects. The phenomenology of object loss treats the Real (*das Ding*) as "presupposed," that is, as chronologically anterior to later developments in the structure of the subject; the Real Thing is the point of drive cathexis that precedes the break marked by the emergence of the Imaginary ego and its manner of constituting objects. But, as known, the Lacanian Real is more than just this developmental presupposition—the lost Thing of

*Trieb* is "posed" by the Imaginary–Symbolic matrix of represented objects. This latter valence of the Real within the libidinal economy is elucidated via the more structuralist version of *objet petit a*.

Lacan's description of *das Ding* as the Real that "suffers from the signifier" is a notion supported by his claim that "a signifier cannot signify itself." This claim translates, into the structuralist parlance of the 1950s, Lacan's post-1960 emphasis on the Real Thing as the vacant, missing center of the representational order of the unconscious. (In the seventh seminar, Lacan talks about how the constellations of *Vorstellungen* ceaselessly revolve around the unrepresentable *das Ding*.) Lacan states:

> The question which is posed and which is properly a question of structure, the one which gives its sense to the fact that the unconscious is structured *like a language,* which in my stating it is a pleonasm, since I identify structure to this 'like a language,' in the structure, precisely, that I am going to try today to make function before you.
>
> What is involved in this Universe of discourse, in so far as it implies this operation of the signifier? In so far as it defines these two dimensions of metaphor—in as much as the chain can always graft itself (*se enter*) with another chain along the path of the operation of substitution—in so far as on the other hand, in its essence, it signifies this sliding which comes from the fact that no signifier belongs properly to any meaning. Having recalled this domain of the Universe of discourse which permits the sea (*mer*) of variations in what constitutes meanings—this essentially moving and transitory order, where nothing . . . can be guaranteed except from the function of what I called in a metaphorical form: *buttoning points* (*points de capiton*)—today, it is this Universe of discourse that it is a matter of questioning, starting from this single axiom regarding which it is a matter of knowing what it may specify within this Universe of discourse. An axiom which is one that I put forward the last time: that the signifier . . . what does it represent faced with itself, with its repetition as a signifying unit? This is defined by the axiom that no signifier—even if it is, *and very precisely when it is,* reduced to its minimal form, the one that we call the *letter*—can signify itself. (*SXIV,* 11/23/66)

How does the axiom that "no signifier can signify itself" relate to drive theory and the theme of object loss? The axis of iteration insists upon the repetition of a primordial form of enjoyment. To accomplish this end, the drive-source dictates isolating certain defining features of the initial Thing of enjoyment—Lacan's unary trait and Leclaire's letters are both signifier-like traits acting as templates that determine libidinal object-choices—so as to be able to follow a representational thread permitting

the re-finding of *das Ding*. The irony is that, once the Real Thing is metonymically dissected into an assemblage of discrete features or marks (distinctive attributes hypothetically separable from the Thing itself), it immediately passes over into being a Symbolic object—*das Ding* becomes *die Sache*. Without the guideposts of Symbolic coordinates—the signifier-like traits/letters identifying and determining drive-objects—the axis of iteration could not re-find the Real Thing. But, the paradoxical impasse of the forced choice of *Trieb* results in the simultaneous barring of access to the Real Thing vis-à-vis the same Symbolic threads permitting its repetitious re-finding. "Your *da* or your *fort*!"—Either distance oneself from *das Ding* by transforming it into a series of iterable *Vorstellungen,* or, even worse, completely lose access to the *jouissance* of this Real Thing by having no Symbolic coordinates through which to re-find it.

The former option of this particular forced choice is what Lacan has in mind by referring to the lack of self-reflexivity in the signifier. In Saussure's theory of meaning, which still retains a referentialist tendency, a signifier signifies a signified. In other words, the signifier refers to or represents either a psychological thing (a perception, an abstract concept) or an actual, material entity (an object in external reality). This relationship can be expressed as s/S ("s" as signified, "S" as signifier), or, translating this into Lacan's drive theory, as d/V ("d" as *das Ding,* "V" as *Vorstellung*). Lacan's whole point is that the repetition of the representation of the drive-object does not yield the Real Thing as present or as re-presented; libidinal iteration isn't a series running $d/V^1$, $d/V^2$, $d/V^3$ . . . Instead, the repetition of a drive-object—only the representation of the object as object, and not as Real Thing, is repeatable—yields the series $d/V^1/V^2/V^3$ . . . Each repetition of the signifier-like *Vorstellung* of the drive-object introduces an ineliminable difference. The signifier $V^2$, although materially identical to $V^1$—it is the same unary trait or letter found in the previous iteration of the object-choice—is formally different. The "signified" of $V^1$ is d, whereas the signified of $V^2$ is $d/V^1$ (and, the signified of $V^3$ will be $d/V^1/V^2$, and so on). The formal difference is—minus the phenomenological account of object loss already elaborated—a minimal temporal factor inherent in the structure of unconscious representation, of a signifying matrix whose diachronous temporal logic mediates the repetitious (a)temporality of *Trieb*'s axis of iteration.

In the $d/V^1/V^2/V^3$ . . . sequence, the only thing that gets repeated without modification or difference is the bar itself determining the relationship between signifier and signified. The repeated bar is the one always found to the immediate left of the "V." (In the second repetition of the *Vorstellung* of the drive-object [$V^2$], the bar to its immediate left designates the compound $d/V^1$ as its signified; in the third repetition [$V^3$], the

bar on the left transforms $d/V^1/V^2$ as a whole into a signified, and so on.) This "barring" of *das Ding* is an effect internal to the logic of the Symbolic mediation of *Trieb*. *Das Ding* is here an inaccessible, impossible Real not because of an anteriority determining it as chronologically/developmentally prior to Symbolic mediation, but primarily because of the signifier-like quality of the representations forming an intrinsic facet of the metapsychological structure of *Trieb*. Žižek writes:

> There is, therefore, the fundamental paradox of the relation of the symbolic and of the real: the bar that separates them is *interior to the symbolic field*—it's the bar that prevents the symbolic from becoming itself, from reaching its full realization. The problem, for the signifier, isn't its impossibility of touching the real, but its impossibility of attaining itself—what is lacking to the signifier isn't simply the object beyond the signifier but the Signifier itself, the signifier that would be the 'property of the subject,' the absolute, non-barred Performative. In more speculative terms: the signifier doesn't simply fail the object; it already has failed in relation to itself—it never realizes itself inasmuch as it's a signifier, and it is in this failure that the object inscribes itself. The object in its positive givenness is nothing but the positivization, the incarnation, the materialization of an insurmountable bar that prevents the signifier from 'becoming itself.' (Žižek 1988, 76–77)

Usually, Lacan's "barred S" ($) is read as the split internal to the speaking subject, namely, the dividing bar between the subject of the utterance and the subject of enunciation. The key to grasping the connection between drive theory and the Lacanian signifier is to understand that the $ also symbolizes the impossibility, internal to the symbolic order itself, of a signifier ever signifying itself. (Perhaps Lacan's matheme of the "barred A," the incomplete and internally contradictory symbolic order qua *grand Autre,* also alludes to this necessary failure on the part of the representational mediators of the libidinal economy.) And, to the extent that *objet petit a* is also caught-up in the logic of the signifier, maybe the matheme of a "barred *a*" would be appropriate here too.

In this fashion, the vicissitudes of the split drive resemble the starting point of the dialectical progression of consciousness in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The opening chapter of this text ("Sense-Certainty") examines the transition from the immediate given-ness of experience to the first attempt to express and/or grasp the truth of this experience.[48] In struggling to understand itself, sensuous certainty inevitably articulates, in a descriptive manner, its own experience. As soon as it does so, the dialectical ball inexorably rolling toward all the subsequent moments of the

*Phenomenology* is set in motion. Sensuous certainty's immediacy of self-satisfied, self-identical "oneness" with experiential existence is lost. Its "own" truth is alienated in language. In seeking to grasp the truth of the present now, one describes it as "now" (for example, "Now it is midnight"). But, given the fluctuating nature of sensuous certainty, this externalized, articulated truth soon becomes false (in fact, it becomes false within a minute, and won't be true again for another twenty-four hours).[49] The linguistic medium supposedly serving the expressive interests of sensuous certainty plays a trick whereby it derails the immediate given-ness of this stage of consciousness onto a track leading to the universality of absolute knowing (this derailing is part of the "cunning of reason"). This aspect of Hegel is precisely what Lacan, via Kojève, appropriates in declaring that, "the word murders the thing."[50] The full, immediate presence of the Real Thing is barred from the subject by the mediation of a representational network called "reality"—that is, the coordinated interactions between the perception-consciousness system, the ego, and the fantasies of the unconscious.

Similarly, as with sensuous certainty's efforts to grasp its own truth, *Trieb* also produces its own hindrance out of itself. The axis of iteration's insistence is always–already mediated by a drive-object qua signifier-like *Vorstellung*. Lacan contends that the repetitious aspect of *Trieb* requires iterable elements (unary traits/letters) in order to negotiate diachronically unfolding series of object-choices.[51] Lacan's Hegelian–Kojèvian pronouncement that "the word murders the thing," as with the rest of his *linguisterie* (Lacan's neologism for his own playful theoretical manipulation of linguistics[52]), isn't a notion limited to spoken language. The "signifiers" of the drives prevent unmediated access to the primordial form of enjoyment endlessly sought by the axis of iteration—the Imaginary–Symbolic object "murders" the Real Thing. But, this death of immediacy isn't a contingent, constructed permutation of the libidinal economy. The drives are self-castrating, since the drive-source commands latching onto Symbolic representations permitting the reinstantiation of prior object-choices. These Symbolic prostheses utilized by the drive-source are like the Platonic–Derridean *pharmakon,* being simultaneously a "remedy" that enables repetition and a "poison" that introduces an ineliminable margin of difference into this very repetition—"the Word, the contraction of the Self outside the Self, involves an irretrievable externalization-alienation" (Žižek 1996b, 46). Žižek continues:

> This paradoxical necessity on account of which the act of returning-to-oneself, of finding oneself, immediately, in its very actualization, assumes the form of its opposite, of the radical loss of one's self-identity,

> displays the structure of what Lacan calls 'symbolic castration.' This castration involved in the passage to the Word can also be formulated as the redoubling, the splitting, of an element into itself and its place in the structure. (Žižek 1996b, 47)

Lacan shifts castration from the anatomical level with which Freud identifies it to the Symbolic level, wherein the drives lose their primordial forms of enjoyment vis-à-vis an inevitable yet alienating mediation—"'castration' designates the fact that the 'full' subject immediately identical with the 'pathological' substance of drives (S) has to sacrifice the unimpeded satisfaction of the drives, to subordinate this substance of drives to the injunctions of an alien ethico-symbolic network" (Žižek 1996b, 123). It must be understood that "symbolic castration" is a consequence of the internal dynamics of *Trieb,* not simply an effect of the external imposition of a sociolinguistic matrix upon the libidinal individual. In order to re-find *das Ding,* the axis of iteration is compelled to isolate particular features, marks, and traits of the Real Thing. These iterable, signifier-like elements are the threads necessary for the activity of re-finding the lost Thing in later experiential contexts. This activity of pursuing *jouissance* through the guidance of Symbolic coordinates produces its own "castration." The drives inadvertently but necessarily transubstantiate the Real Thing from the immediate self-presence of the archaic entity enjoyed by the drives into a formal vanishing point, a vacant structural locus, occupied by subsequent substitutive replacements.[53] After symbolic castration, an unbridgeable gap opens between the Real-as-content (the immediacy of the libidinal Thing's self-presence, the Real as anterior to Symbolic mediation) and the Real-as-form (the empty place in the symbolic order determining sublimation, the Real as internal to Symbolic mediation).

A related point of interest here is Žižek's distinction between the "element itself" and its "place in the structure": The former designates whatever contingent, material entity just so happens, at a given time, to occupy the place of *das Ding*—the Imaginary substitutive object that, through sublimation, is "raised to the dignity of the Thing"; the latter marks the empty structural node waiting to be filled-out by a contingent, material entity—the Real as a "hole in the Symbolic," a vacant space in the formal network of the symbolic order. Žižek's claim is that the Real side of *objet petit a* (the "place in the structure") is not a tangible, dense self-presence veiled by the ephemeral, illusory "virtual reality" of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The "beyond" of *das Ding* is an inaccessibility immanent to the fabric of the symbolic order itself.[54] Hence, Žižek favors reading the Real as a formal effect immanent to the Symbolic—at the expense of the notion of the Real-as-content.

However, it is not necessary to conceive of the Real-as-content and the Real-as-form as mutually exclusive conceptualizations of this Lacanian category. They each have their appropriate place. The former corresponds to Freud's more literal version of castration (as well as Lacan's thematic of the Law). The primary love-object (namely, the mother) is prohibited by the threatening commands of the paternal figure. The Real-as-content is the lost object in the chronological sense, that is, the earliest point of attachment for the libidinal economy. The latter (the Real-as-form) differs from the former as symbolic castration differs from the traditional Freudian thematic of castration. The primary object qua object never really existed in the first place; it is a mythical anteriority—a fantasy of a prior full *jouissance*—sustained by the inability of any contingent, subliminatory object to completely fill-in the vacant formal node in the Symbolic. The Real-as-form is the bar internal to the logic of the signifier, the bar preventing any signifier–*Vorstellung* of *Trieb* from signifying itself. On this second level, castration is not a matter of a chronological/developmental loss resulting from external prohibition, but is, instead, a loss conditioned by the innate mechanisms of the drives themselves. In Freudian castration, an externally imposed aim-inhibition necessitates a subsequent process of sublimation. In symbolic castration, the very sublimation of drive produces its own aim-inhibition, that is, *aim-inhibition is not the prior cause of the drifting of drive from object to object, but vice versa.*

Furthermore, symbolic castration, which transforms the Real-as-lost-content into the Real-as-inaccessible-form, is responsible for the cleaving of *jouissance* into *jouissance* expected and *jouissance* obtained. In particular, *jouissance* expected is an outcome of the retroactive temporality of the *point de capiton*. How is this so? The barrier between $ and *a,* a (non)relation which Lacan claims all fantasies address—this would include the fantasies of a full satisfaction of *Trieb* and/or the *jouissance* of the Other—is produced by the inherent structural impossibility of a signifier qua representational drive-object ever signifying itself. The indefinite unfurling of the diachronic series d/ $V^1/V^2/V^3$ . . . is driven by the constitutive inaccessibility of returning to a direct relationship with *das Ding*. However, each attempt is made (a new "V" is reinvoked) because the futility of this quest is veiled from the subject of the unconscious by fantasies making it seem as if the structural deadlock intrinsic to *Trieb* (in this case, the logic of the *Vorstellungen* mediating its demands) could be potentially overcome. What's more, these fantasies are not leftovers from a prior period of subjective development. They are the residual defensive effects arising from the fact that the representational nature of all drive-objects creates the aim-inhibition of these same drives. Like Freud's dubious history of instinctual renunciation, the fantasies conditioned by the Symbolic deadlock of the axis of alteration project *jouissance* expected

back into a fictional past, into a libidinal paradise lost. These fantasies of the always-past Real thereby make it seem as if it is possible, in principle at least, to obtain the expected *jouissance;* this then becomes the *à venir* lure prompting the perpetual motility of the libidinal economy. The necessary aim-inhibition resulting from the internal logic of drive representatives—the deadlock of the Real-as-form immanent to the Symbolic—is projectively/fantasmatically transformed into a contingent aim-inhibition imposed by a prohibitory *Umwelt,* hence sustaining the illusion of the Real as merely a lost content capable of recovery once conditions in external reality change.

The difference between the axis of iteration and the axis of alteration can thus be discerned through the relationship between the Real-as-content and the Real-as-form. The "categorical imperative" of the drive-source demands the repetitious reinstantiation of a determinate content—a particular mode of enjoyment first experienced in a pre-subjective state. However, this insistence is always–already mediated by the representational order of drive-objects; the drive-source needs Symbolic coordinates to guide its activities aimed at re-finding the Real Thing. This mediation of the demand by the object marks the juncture where content immediately passes over into form. The Real-as-content (the *Ding an sich* to be re-found, the chronologically anterior point of cathexis) is automatically transformed into the Real-as-form (the lack created by the structural impossibility of an objectival *Vorstellung* ever yielding the immediate self-presence of the *jouissance*-laden Thing). In Hegel, the beginning of the dialecticization of consciousness occurs when the immediate, determinate content of sensuous certainty wishes to apprehend itself in its own truth—its voluntary efforts to do so result in its unavoidable (self-) alienation. Sensuous certainty, in trying to know itself as a unique particular, reflectively recovers itself strictly through the defiles of a universal milieu of mediation—for instance, the signifiers by which it expresses the truth of itself. The same holds for *Trieb:* The cyclical (a)temporality of the axis of iteration, in attempting to reinstantiate/re-find the particular content of its own *jouissance,* inadvertently yet unavoidably alienates itself in the dialectical temporality of the axis of alteration.

## §32 Dialecticized Temporality—Memory in Sufferance

There are two different dialectics at work in the functioning of *Trieb*—a dialectic internal to the axis of alteration and a dialectic operative between the two drive axes. The dialectic internal to the axis of alteration re-

sembles what Hegel describes as "bad infinity"—"Something becomes an other; this other is itself somewhat; therefore it likewise becomes an other, and so on *ad infinitum*" (Hegel 1975, 137 [§93]). Hegel continues:

> This *Infinity* is the wrong or negative infinity: it is only a negation of a finite: but the finite rises again the same as ever, and is never got rid of and absorbed. In other words, this infinite only expresses the *ought-to-be* elimination of the finite. The progression to infinity never gets further than a statement of the contradiction involved in the finite, viz. that it is somewhat as well as somewhat else. It sets up with endless iteration the alternation between these two terms, each of which calls up the other. (Hegel 1975, 137 [§94])

Spurious infinity is, in essence, an infinite regression—the vain effort to attain the infinite through the endlessly repeated act/process of adding always one more particular element to a finite series of preceding elements. Like the finish line of Zeno's paradox, infinity proper cannot be reached through finite succession. No quantity of additional particulars (what Hegel calls the "somewhat") will ever cross the threshold separating the finite particular from the infinite universal. Indeed, the process of counting from one to infinity is an infinite labor. But, a labor such as this, which is intrinsically unable to achieve its end—only its failure is infinite—is, in Hegel's view, "bad" or "spurious."

Jacques-Alain Miller formulates a similar version of this problem of infinite regression. In "Matrix," he refers to the perpetually reduplicated coupling of the "All" (A) and the "Nothing" (N). Whenever an ontological totality is posited (A), it entails a correlative absence of being as its corresponding limit (N as not-A). According to Miller, as soon as an A is constituted, an N is set over-against it automatically. But, once A faces N, A is not the All qua complete totality. A must then encompass—or, in Hegelese, sublate—N. Once this sublation is accomplished, a new All arises ($A^2$). Of course, along with $A^2$ comes the inevitable $N^2$. The All must again sublate the Nothing, and so on ad infinitum. Miller claims that the N causes the reduplication of A, thus translating Hegelian bad infinity into the Lacanian proposition that the repetition of the drives is driven by an ineliminable lack or absence—"The unique operation that repeats itself is written: A→N→A. N causes the reduplication of A" (Miller 1997, 46). The Hegelian–Kojèvian theme of man's desire as essentially negative, of desire as negativity, underlies Miller's Lacanian reasoning here.[55]

Hegelian dialectic is identified with the mechanism of *Aufhebung*, that is, an active process of negation that, although negating a given thing, nonetheless preserves, in a certain fashion, what it negates. It operates as

a sort of paradoxical preservation-in-destruction. How might spurious infinity and *Aufhebung* be related to metapsychology? What purpose is there in invoking Hegel here? *Objet petit a* is a Borromean knotting of Lacan's three registers: As Imaginary, object *a* is the specular, substitutive object related to by the ego as a subliminatory stand-in for the lost Thing of the drives; as Symbolic, object *a* is the specular object of the Imaginary insofar as the imagistic, representational object is simultaneously a signifier-like function subjected to the temporal logic of the Lacanian signifier (for example, the visual scene serving as the symptomatic nucleus of a two-event hysterical trauma is a "signifier" to the extent that its significance-value is retroactively altered by a *point de capiton* effect resulting from the mnemic inscription of a later, second scene); as Real, object *a* is simultaneously both the archaic object-choice of the drives prior to prohibition as well as a retroactive construction arising from internal deadlocks plaguing the Symbolically mediated drive. Object *a* is a crystallized manifestation of the bad infinity of *Trieb*.

The Imaginary facet of object *a* is simply the ego's misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the fact that its object-choices are overdetermined by an unconscious formal template. The ego is not aware that its cathexes are not due to the unique and special attributes of the present object fascinating it within its immediate status quo—nobody is aware, for example, that his/her lover is chosen on the basis of a particular unary trait. The Imaginary conceals the splitting of the drive-object between the Real and the Symbolic, or, more specifically, between the Real-as-content and the Real-as-form respectively. The *Aufhebung* of *objet petit a* (what Lacan calls the "dialectic of desire") is the dialectical sublation of the past Real-as-content (the lost *Ding an sich* of obtainable *jouissance*) by the present Real-as-form, by the Symbolic mediation of the drives generating the fundamental fantasy of a full *jouissance* eternally expected but never actually obtained. The infinite in the bad infinity of the libidinal economy is the "it" in *ce n'est pas ça*. The drives inevitably seek Symbolic coordinates so as to re-find their primordial Real Things; they vainly attempt to recover the past in an unaltered form through the necessarily distorting mediation of a present framework, namely, a lens that, while granting formal access to the lost past, nonetheless retroactively modifies this very past in the act of providing access to it. This results in the self-sundering of *Trieb,* in the Symbolic murder of the immediacy of the Real *Ding an sich*—the death of chronologically anterior libidinal immediacy, the elision of the Real-as-content. This lost Real is preserved solely as a formal template, an empty Symbolic place capable of being temporarily occupied in the present by an inadequate Imaginary substitute that is raised to the deceptive dignity of the always-past Thing.[56] However, situating this dynamic within the

drive-object itself ignores the actual complicity of all four components of *Trieb*'s structure in the spurious infinity of libidinal object-choice. *Objet petit a* is the symptom of the split drive.

Asking what determines object *a* as a symptomatic effect leads to the second dialectic at work in *Trieb*—the dialectic operative between the axis of iteration and the axis of alteration. The tension between the source-pressure axis and the aim-object axis is more akin to Marx's dialectic qua "class struggle" than Hegel's dialectical progression centered on the construction of increasingly comprehensive syntheses. In the twentieth seminar, Lacan dismisses Hegel's version of dialectic—"when one gives rise to two (*quand un fait deux*), there is never a return. They don't revert to making one again, even if it is a new one. *Aufhebung* is one of philosophy's pretty little dreams" (*SXX,* 86). Here, Lacan's rejection of sublation as dialectical synthesis is directly linked to his theory of sexual difference: There is no natural, genital union possible that would result in a harmonious, unproblematic existence between the sexes—sexuality is a Symbolic phenomenon constructed out of an irreconcilable antagonism between two nonnatural poles.[57] Žižek frequently illustrates the Lacanian conception of sexual difference through the Marxist notion of class struggle as a "constitutive antagonism."[58] Just as Marx's version of society is a "Whole" whose overall coherence is conditioned by the existence of polarizing tensions between classes—through history and society as objects of analysis, Marx "discovers" the paradoxical idea of a unity sustained by internal differential antagonisms[59]—so also Lacan's version of natural heterosexual coupling (the "unity" or "wholeness" of genital sexuality) is a cohesion made possible by an underlying Symbolic dichotomy.

Žižek goes on to point out that, in Marxist theory, nobody is capable of stepping outside of the ideological grounds connected with class struggle. In other words, no individual in a given society can speak from a neutral third position beyond the antagonism operative between the socioeconomic factions of that society. Anyone professing to speak in this mode is merely masking a position reflecting the particular interests of one class or the other. (Even if the individual isn't consciously aware of serving class ideology, she/he is nonetheless overdetermined by an "unconscious" structural constraint inherent to his/her social, economic, and historical position.) History, in Marx's sense, is hence driven along by a constitutive antagonism.[60] Similarly, Marx also presents interpreters of both individual consciousness as well as the sociocultural field with a clear forced choice: Either a given phenomenon is a blatant expression of class struggle, or a given phenomenon, while appearing to be neutral and/or indifferent to class struggle, is merely a sophisticated mask for class

struggle. There is no third choice whereby a phenomenon could be read as apolitical.

In connection with his appropriation of Marx, Žižek contends that the Lacanian Real is a nonhistorical structure producing historical phenomena—"This kernel of the Real encircled by failed attempts to symbolize-totalize it is radically *non-historical:* history itself is nothing but a succession of failed attempts to grasp, conceive, specify this strange kernel" (Žižek 1991a, 101). "Reality," in the strict Lacanian sense, would be the "succession of failed attempts" to apprehend and domesticate the constitutive antagonism of the Real. How does this apply to drive theory? Elsewhere, Žižek speaks of *Trieb* as "metaphysical"—"drive can be said to be 'meta-physical': not in the sense of being beyond the domain of the physical, but in the sense of involving another materiality beyond (or, rather, beneath) the materiality located in (what we experience as) spatio-temporal reality" (Žižek 1997b, 32). In this schema, the Real–reality dichotomy corresponds to the difference between *Trieb* and "spatio-temporal reality" respectively. The error here is to situate *Trieb* strictly on one side of the Real–reality divide. Since drives are compound circuits juxtaposing a heterogeneous series of levels—source, pressure, aim, and object; Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary—the "Real" of *Trieb* qua constitutive antagonism is a second-order Real, namely, the irresolvable tension between the Real of the drive-source and the spatio-temporal reality of the Imaginary–Symbolic drive-objects. The Real therefore has, in this present context, two meanings: $\text{Real}^1$ is the pre-Symbolic Real of the axis of iteration's source, the repetitious (a)temporality of unmediated *jouissance;* $\text{Real}^2$ is the constitutive antagonism between $\text{Real}^1$ and the axis of alteration's *Vorstellungen,* the bad infinity intrinsic to the logic of the signifier-like drive-objects and their diachronous temporality.

The "forced choice" of the Marxist interpretation of history is also relevant in this discussion of drive theory. The conflict between drive-source and drive-object is analogous to class conflict, the two drive axes marking the irreconcilable tension inherent to drive—without this tension, drive per se would not exist, reverting back into mere instinct in the absence of an internal impasse. Also, the source-object opposition is akin to the "*jouissance* expected" versus "*jouissance* obtained" opposition: Since no object qua object can fully satisfy the source's quest for *das Ding,* the object strands *jouissance* in the deferred realm of expectation; but, the "or worse" option of giving into the drive-source as much as possible—living out the drive—transforms the "sexiness" of expectation into the traumatizing "ugliness" of actualization. Consequently, just as there exists no neutral ground free of class-conditioned ideology, so too is the psychoanalytic

subject, faced with the constitutive antagonism of *Trieb,* incapable of fleeing to the safety of a third, drive-free position. The forced choice of *Trieb* can be worded as: Either be a subject condemned to the spurious infinity of desire's *ce n'est pas ça*—give precedence to the axis of alteration; or, even worse, undergo subjective destitution by animalistically attempting to treat one's drives as instincts to be obeyed—give precedence to the axis of iteration. In the latter "or worse" option, one runs up against the antagonisms between the drive axes as well as between the two antithetical modes of *jouissance.*

Furthermore, just as there are two Reals, so also there are two dialectics active in the metapsychological organization of *Trieb:* Dialectic[1] is the Hegelian bad infinity internal to the representational level of drive—the lack propelling the infinite motility of desire's diachronous drifting from *Vorstellung*–signifier to *Vorstellung*–signifier is the Real that is immanent to the representational order of drives, namely, the bar prohibiting a signifier from signifying itself; dialectic[2] is the Marxist constitutive antagonism between the representational level of drive, the level containing dialectic[1], and the "non-representational" level of drive, the repetitious (a)temporality of the axis of iteration. Dialectic[2] results from the incompatibility between the axis of iteration's impossible demand for an eternal return of *jouissance* and the temporalized axis of alteration's attempted *Aufhebung* of this demand for a repetition of the past within the context of the present—a sublation that, unlike in Hegel, always leaves a remainder in terms of the ineliminable margin of dissatisfaction plaguing the libidinal subject.

If the antagonism of *Trieb* is primarily a tension between source and object, how are the other two categories of drive structure (aim and pressure) to be situated? Aim-inhibition is a by-product of dialectic[1] (the drive-aim is always inhibited, insofar as drives differ from instincts), whereas drive-pressure is a correlate of dialectic[2]. In Freud's account, aim-inhibition is conditioned by external reality; only when the *Umwelt* makes the attainment of a certain form of enjoyment dangerous is sublimation necessary. Through the more thorough understanding of the logic of psychical (re)presentations revealed by Lacan, aim-inhibition is not a contingent vicissitude of *Trieb,* but, rather, the inevitable outcome of drive's own self-hindrance. The aim dictated by all drives is the repetition of a past form of satisfaction. However, since this aim is necessarily mediated by the conjunction of the demand for attaining this aim with the object through which this aim is possible, the original aim itself becomes an impossibility (just as, with the death drive, it hinders its own aim of eliminating all tension since it, as a drive, is an internal generator of tension). Thus, dialectic[1] (the axis of alteration) fails to achieve the aim demanded

by the drive-source. As such, a residual quota of drive-pressure is the remainder from this unsuccessful sublation of the past (the nonrepresentational Thing) in and by the present (the representational, signifier-like object).

Drive-pressure takes two forms—the general affective state of anxiety as well as the psychical agency of the super-ego. The archaic prototype of the super-ego is the merciless, dictatorial drive-source, an inner authority from which no flight is possible. Its avatar is the Lacanian super-ego, with its command "Enjoy!" However, since this imperative of the drive-sources is impossible to fulfill, the Lacanian super-ego metamorphoses into the Freudian super-ego, into the prohibitive agency embodied by the introjected features of the (parental) big Other. Why does this metamorphosis take place? Freud's answer is that the aggressive drives are satisfactorily sublimated by attacking the ego through the inducement of guilt. But, in generalizing the death drive as paradigmatic of all drives, Freud's account is unsatisfying; he speaks as though only one drive or group of drives is involved in the construction of the super-ego. All drives contain a drive-source, namely, a prototypical super-ego. Additionally, all drives are split along the lines of a permanent incompatibility between the source and its representational paths of discharge (the drive-objects qua *Vorstellungen*). The Freudian form of the super-ego is consequently a secondary defense, not against the dangers of a prohibitory, punitive *Umwelt,* but, primarily, against the internal threat of an insatiable, unrelenting drive-source. The "sense of conscience" is an alibi of sorts protecting the subject from the trauma of living out the drives. Therefore, drive-pressure, as the anxiety-provoking super-ego, is the conditioned outcome of dialectic$^2$.

The temporality of *Trieb,* as the constant tension between the axis of iteration and the axis of alteration, is thus the nonhistorical motor behind the plethora of historicized instantiations of the libidinal economy—*objet petit a,* the super-ego, the derailing of instinct into desire, and so on. How does this temporal approach to the metapsychology of drives relate to Freud's assertions about the timelessness of the unconscious? Regarding the drives, the unconscious is a collection of defensive mechanisms for coping with the constitutive antagonism internal to each and every drive. Fate neuroses, fantasies of the *jouissance* of the Other, the super-ego, and the clinging to "castration" as a *sinthome* of the "forced choice" of *Trieb* are means of dealing with the impossibility of a human return to instinct, of a regressive surrender to the rhythm of the drive-source. Both Hegel and Marx believe in an "end of history" as a point at which the dialectical antagonisms driving historical development attain a final reconciliation. (For Hegel, this marks the advent of "absolute knowing," whereas, for

Marx, history ends with a revolutionary overcoming of class hierarchies.) In terms of the two dialectics of drive, the "end of history," as the eventual surpassing or synthesis of the incompatibility between source and object, is unattainable. The temporal tension between the axes is determinative of the essential nature of *Trieb*.

The unconscious is "timeless" exclusively insofar as it stages fantasies in which the end of libidinal history is brought about: "When I finally eliminate this one external impediment, then I'll enjoy life"; "When I become more like my neighbors, then I'll be able to live a content and placid existence"; "When the 'revolution' comes, then society will allow me to achieve what I really want"; "When the psychoanalyst cures me, then I'll be free to 'enjoy my enjoyment,'" and so on. The temporal dynamic of *Trieb*'s internal self-sundering is the traumatic, ahistorical kernel from which the subject cannot flee. Instead, the subject's unconscious fantasmatically elides the temporal, diachronous drifting of the always-derailed drive. Externalized aim-inhibition and the prohibitory super-ego are the two guardians of the unconscious' fantasmatic defenses against the split *Trieb*. One's ego either suffers anxiety and guilt in unwittingly helping the unconscious sustain these veils covering the horrific visage of a monstrous, sadistic drive-source whose demands are impossible . . . or worse.

Conclusion

# The Uniquely Human Double Bind

In his 1786 essay "Speculative Beginning of Human History," Kant presents a hypothetical reconstruction of the historical emergence of reason. He describes the transformation of the human individual, replete with his/her instincts, desires, urges, and so on—everything Kant considers, from within the parameters of his metaphysics of morals, to be part of pathological human nature—into something more than human, namely, a rational being. Much like Freud's speculations in *Civilization and Its Discontents,* Kant presumes that, throughout the earliest stages of development, human beings lived in accordance with instinct alone; humanity rested content in its tranquil coexistence with its naturally bequeathed (animal) being. Whereas Freud blames civilization's rule of law for forcing instinctual renunciation upon the individual, Kant posits that reason is responsible for derailing the individual from instinct.[1]

What does Kant mean by "reason" within the context of this speculative history of humanity's development? Here, he's thinking of reason primarily as per its status in his practical philosophy. Kant distinguishes between reason and instinct along the same lines as between pure will and inclination: Reason is the capacity of human beings, as rational creatures, to transcend their animalistic inclinations—biological needs, psychological wants, and so on—through reflective deliberation on what intentional mechanisms can or should regulate a given action. In other words, unlike animals, who are supposedly governed strictly by the unreflective automaticity of instinctual patterns—creatures without reason are, in Kant's view, mere puppets of nature, being nothing more than empirically conditioned natural machines—human beings, through their rational self-consciousness, are at least capable (even if factually they don't exercise this capability) of assessing the logically possible choices for behavior

associated with particular circumstances. For instance, in a given situation "x," two courses of action are logically possible ("y" and "z"). Although human nature as inclination might heavily favor choice "y," reason provides the subject with the understanding that, despite the demands of nature, "z" is still a possibility. For Kant, a key aspect of the ethical side of the subject is its ability, through dutiful adherence to rationally established laws, to opt for "z" although inclination insists upon "y."

The majority of Kant's writings on the ethical dimension of reason, along with many of the commentaries on his practical philosophy, appear to portray reason as a human endowment of marvelous beauty. Reason is a "gift," the deservedly prized treasure possessed by humanity, an admirable universality that is "in human nature more than human nature itself." But, "Speculative Beginning of Human History" (as well as a few select passages from other texts constituting Kant's practical philosophy) adds an interesting twist: Reason is a burdensome curse, a parasite upsetting what would otherwise be the human individual's peaceful, harmonious relationship with the natural world. Even the subject's rapport with its own body is disturbed by the intrusive legislating voice of ethical reason. Reason prevents one from enjoying one's enjoyment. Idiosyncratic, private pleasures are tainted by the indelible stain of an a priori guilt.

Kant blames reason, as the capacity for reflecting on one's needs and wants, for both introducing unnecessary, trivial desires "beyond instinctual nature" as well as for preventing the subject from simply surrendering to the ebb and flow of naturally regulated instinctual life. The transcendental freedom of the noumenal subject also entails a transcendence in which the human being suffers a loss, namely, an expulsion from the realm of instinctual animality. As Kant frequently observes, if humanity was intended to enjoy happiness, then nature made a grave mistake in infusing human subjects with reason—the price to be paid for becoming a rational being is precisely this sacrifice of happiness.[2] Through this infusion, the individual is simultaneously confused about what she/he really wants—for example, in culinary matters, reflective deliberation permits the subject to construct a plethora of choices regarding food, even though, from the perspective of physical need, these choices are superfluous—and, even when a choice is indeed made from amongst the nonnatural options reason offers to need, the subject is unable repeatedly to take the same pleasure in it as that supposedly obtained by a purely natural, animalistic creature.[3]

Furthermore, Kant stipulates that, once the realm of (ethical) reason is entered, no regressive escape back into instinctual nature is possible—"it was now equally impossible for him to turn back from his once tasted state of freedom to his former servitude (to the rule of the in-

stincts)" (Kant 1983, 51). And, even worse, not only is this alienation from nature irreversible, but the human subject is never completely and successfully transformed into a wholly rational being. This subject never fully sheds its natural side. Instinctual factors cling to the subject as pathological remainders, as residues guaranteeing a perpetual state of guilt before the tribunal of the categorical imperative—because the individual cannot voluntarily control his/her inclinations, and because inclination is an omnipresent dimension of the phenomenal portion of subjectivity, the subject is always struggling to transcend itself. In other words, the Kantian subject is stranded in a kind of purgatory, a "no-man's land" somewhere in-between nature and reason.[4] This subject is irreparably split along the lines of these two constitutively incompatible spheres. Or, as Pascal expresses it, "reason always remains to denounce the baseness and injustice of the passions and to disturb the peace of those who surrender to them. And the passions are always alive in those who want to renounce them."[5]

Hence, Kant's thought paves the way for the psychoanalytic conceptualization of drives. In Kantian terms, *Trieb* is precisely instinct once caught between nature and reason qua self-consciousness's interfering reflective deliberation on one's pathological inclinations. Additionally, this makes clear exactly why, according to this project, the subject is guilty before two conflictual masters, that is, the Freudian super-ego and the Lacanian super-ego. Like the categorical imperative, the prohibitory Freudian super-ego continually demands that the subject surrender its desires; and, because the subject is incapable of completely liquidating its inclinations, this Kantian side of the super-ego inevitably spoils the subject's enjoyment by inflicting penalties in the form of negative affects. At this level, the subject's inability to decisively surmount its drives is responsible for the loss of "happiness," a loss rendering impossible any pacifying truce between the pleasure and reality principles.

On the other hand, the properly human dilemma arises from the fact that the subject is simultaneously answerable to another authority, namely, the Lacanian super-ego as the embodiment of the uncompromising commands of the drive-sources to obtain *jouissance* ("Enjoy!"). In the face of this tyrant, the subject is always–already guilty of having "given up on its desire." That is to say, not only is the subject unable to transcend its phenomenal, empirically conditioned side (that is, the individual is a priori guilty before the judgment of the Kantian ethical imperative and/or the Freudian super-ego), but—here is the impasse making this a tragic catch-22—the subject is prevented from ever regressively overcoming its noumenal-rational alienation from an instinctual enjoyment unsullied by the stains of shame and guilt. The Lacanian super-ego tirelessly punishes the subject for its futile attempts to cede its inclinations, regardless of

whether this ceding is motivated by the pleasure principle or by moral sentiments.

From this perspective, further light can be shed on the figure of Oedipus, insofar as his tragedy is emblematic of the uniquely human double bind. Interpreting the inexorable movement of Oedipus' destiny as a metaphor for the unconscious machinations of the drives—Oedipus is "unconscious" while actually performing his fate driven actions—Oedipus represents the subject as stranded between "too much drive" (the upsurge of uncontrollable, pathological inclination, painfully overwhelming the subject's freedom and making the subject guilty before the Law) and "too little drive" (the incapacity of the subject to "enjoy enjoyment," the ineliminable remainder of unnatural rationality clinging to even the most animalistic, hedonistic acts).

Prior to the tragic events of *Oedipus Rex,* Oedipus is foretold his fate: He will murder his father and sleep with his mother. Understandably, Oedipus is consciously repulsed and horrified by the prospect of committing such atrocities. He takes steps to prevent himself from performing these prophesied deeds. (Although, if Oedipus is himself an Oedipal subject as per Freudian theory, then he may indeed harbor unconscious wishes along these lines, that is, fantasies of Oedipal "*jouissance* expected.") Unfortunately, the very effort to avoid fate leads the ignorant Oedipus along the thread of his consciously disavowed future. This is the problem, facing all subjects, of "too much drive": Even when one renounces *Trieb,* its very vicissitudes inevitably lead to a return of the repressed. The labor of instinctual renunciation is never complete, and the confused ego unwittingly finds itself perplexingly guilty before the Law, given that it serves the drives without being aware of its own subjugation. Oedipus, prior to his after the fact realization of the nature of his already committed acts, represents the position of the ego, namely, a *méconnaissance* of conscious freedom sustained only by ignorance. In "Drives and Their Vicissitudes," Freud remarks that, "we may also regard these vicissitudes as modes of *defense* against the instincts" (*SE* 14: 127). The vicissitudes of Oedipus' destiny are equivalent with his defensive efforts to avoid this same destiny. Such mechanisms as repression and sublimation are never quite successful means of fleeing from the internal dictatorship of the drives. (For Lacan, the vicissitudes of the drive result in its transformation into desire, which is itself a defense against the "fate" of *jouissance* as the ever-returning Real—the vicissitudes of *Trieb* err on the side of "too little drive.")

And yet, by the time that Oedipus realizes that he never really was free in terms of successfully avoiding his destiny, the inherent imbalance of *Trieb* swings to the opposite extreme of "too little drive." He retroac-

tively comprehends that, unlike most repressed individuals, he managed to unknowingly live out the drives. He actually obtained *jouissance* under the guidance of an unconscious trajectory, a compulsive course of driven movement. But, what happens to him once he is struck by this realization? Oedipus is immediately crushed under the weight of a maddening anguish. He gouges out his own two eyes, eyes polluted by having witnessed the concrete actualization of unconscious fantasies that, once actualized, are suddenly transubstantiated into an overwhelmingly horrific, traumatizing ordeal. Once his libidinal trajectory has played itself out as a fait accompli (in other words, once the Lacanian super-ego qua driven destiny has had its way), Oedipus, as a being incapable of an unproblematic return to instinctual animality, is unable to enjoy the obtainment of *jouissance*. The Kantian–Freudian super-ego instantaneously subjectivizes Oedipus's fate in the gesture of a guilt-inducing *après-coup*. The resolution of the intrinsic antagonism between "too much drive" and "too little drive" would be either the barring of instinct (the complete ascension to the transcendental realm of pure noumenal reason, the full surmounting of instinct without remainder) or the barring of the Law (the regressive return to nature, the elimination of the big Other's interference with one's libidinal economy). Instead, what gets barred is precisely the possibility of well-adjusted subjectivity, of a peaceful compromise between the axes of the split *Trieb*.

Nonetheless, all is not lost, therapeutically or theoretically. An important feature of the end of an analysis, a terminal point at which the analytic process should aim, is the dissolution of the transference. The thoroughly analyzed patient is someone who has worked through the stakes and the implications of his/her multifaceted investment in the analyst (as both a person and a position). Additionally, one of Lacan's most crucial contributions to an understanding of the phenomenon of the transference is his definition of it as grounded upon the analysand's imputation to the analyst of the status of "subject supposed to know" (*sujet supposé savoir*).[6] A further specification of this imputed status ought to be added here: One of the things that the analyst is often suspected of knowing is the secret to happiness, the key to unlocking a hitherto inaccessible enjoyment. That is to say, the analyst is also the subject supposed to enjoy, an ostensible expert who knows something special about this, with this aspect of the transference being the specifically clinical version of fantasies concerning "the *jouissance* of the Other." The manner in which the patient, upon entering analysis as well as during the evolving course of the treatment, imaginarily constructs for himself/herself fantasies of what will be involved in the eagerly and impatiently awaited cure is an integral ingredient of the transferential glue binding him/her to the analyst.

Taking this into account, the end of analysis comes about when the analysand is "cured of the cure." If the end of analysis is linked to the dissolution of the transference as one of its criteria, and if the transference brings into play fantasmatic expectations and anticipations concerning the curative results of the analytic process, then (assuming these fantasies of the cure to be ones that stage scenarios in which the discontent of the split drives is overcome) the analyst must bring the analysand to confront a certain disappointment (Lacan's "subjective destitution" as an outcome of "traversing the fantasy"). The analysand has to pass through this disappointment—a kind of Hegelian–Žižekian "tarrying with the negative"—in order to have any hope of living a life that's marginally better than one burdened with false hopes and impossible ideals. As Bruce Fink puts it, "we judge our jouissance against a standard of what we think *it should be,* against an absolute standard, a norm, a benchmark" (Fink 2002, 34). Fink goes on to note that:

> [T]he fantasy that we could attain such perfect, total . . . satisfaction . . . is so powerful that we feel this Other jouissance has to be, has to exist. Yet if it were not for this fantasy, we might be more content with the jouissance we do actually obtain. Thus while Lacan says that, according to the fantasy, this Other jouissance should be, should exist, from the point of view of the satisfactions we actually do obtain, it should not be because it merely makes matters worse. We might say that *it never fails to make matters worse* . . . it is the idea of a jouissance that never fails and that never fails to diminish still further the little jouissance we already have. (Fink 2002, 36)

Analysands undoubtedly try to turn analytic treatment itself into yet another support for these fantasies of "an-Other *jouissance,*" into yet another deceptive transformation of a necessarily unobtainable enjoyment into a contingent, gratuitous deprivation. Being "cured of the cure" means being led to that final point where one is capable of accepting that what was fantasmatically expected/anticipated prior to the end of the analysis—"When the analyst cures me, then I'll be happy, content, and free of pain"—is itself a chimera produced by a neurotic manner of coping with the self-defeating dynamic of the libidinal economy. After passing through this difficult moment, the analysand at least might be able to secure a bit more satisfaction from the little pleasures of quotidian existence, once these pleasures are not completely overshadowed by unattainable standards of a nonexistent enjoyment.

In one of his final papers, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," Freud indicates that analysis cannot totally inoculate people against sub-

sequent outbreaks of psychopathological illness; due to the unpredictability of the formidably complex human mental apparatus, old symptoms and/or new problems can be (re)activated by unforeseen future events in the individual's always-open life history.[7] Similarly, given the innate, constitutional nature of the drives as divided against themselves, it is quite unlikely that analysis could successfully disburden its patients of all their futile fantasies by which they defend themselves against this painful cut carved into the very foundation of their libidinal being. However, analysis has a better chance than other approaches of helping its patients to recognize and combat the more unbearable feelings arising from their inevitable attempts to fantasmatically cover over the split in *Trieb:* The mournful sorrow and regret of having supposedly squandered or lost some contentment present or potentially promised in the past, the sense of tragic victimization or angry frustration arising from what is perceived as an unnecessary lack of some possible fulfillment waiting in an elsewhere yet-to-come, the jealous suspicion and envious hatred of those presumed to enjoy things better and more fully . . . and so on.

In the eleventh seminar, Lacan discusses two ways of engaging in *trompe-l'oeil* painting.[8] In the simpler of the two techniques, one paints objects to look so realistic that the viewer is fooled into believing that the objects are really there as physically present entities. A more devious technique is to paint a realistic-looking picture of a drape, cloth, or veil. In a successful instance of the latter sort, the viewer is thereby tricked into asking, "Why don't you pull down the covering so that I can see what you've painted?" Of course, there's nothing behind the veil, since the veil itself is the painting. The desiring subject, subjected to the split drives, is caught in just such a trap. As long as the impossible request to "pull down the covering" (that is, to turn *jouissance* expected into *jouissance* obtained) is not performed/fulfilled, the belief in the substantial existence of something behind the tantalizing-yet-less-than-satisfactory appearance (the *objet petit a*) is sustained. But, if the attempt is actually made to remove the barrier posed by this supposed obstacle, then the game is over. The mask no longer effectively functions as a mask, since it shows itself as hiding nothing. Likewise, the analyst is the figure who, instead of pulling back the curative therapeutic veil to reveal a new, placid, nonneurotic future for the analysand, merely points out to the analysand that there's nothing behind the veil—this punch line having cost the patient thousands of dollars and a similar number of hours to wrest from the couch of the *sujet supposé savoir.* Although this analytic gesture might seem heartless (and perhaps even exploitative), enabling patients to stare directly at their fundamental condition, to come face-to-face with this unembellished Real and the modes by which it has woven itself into the fabric of their very

existence, is the only honest form of therapeutic treatment. It appears excessively cruel solely to those willing to deceive themselves and their patients with empty, utopian promises, promises that ultimately promise nothing more than to continue enthralling people with vain hopes of a future that continually spoils the present.

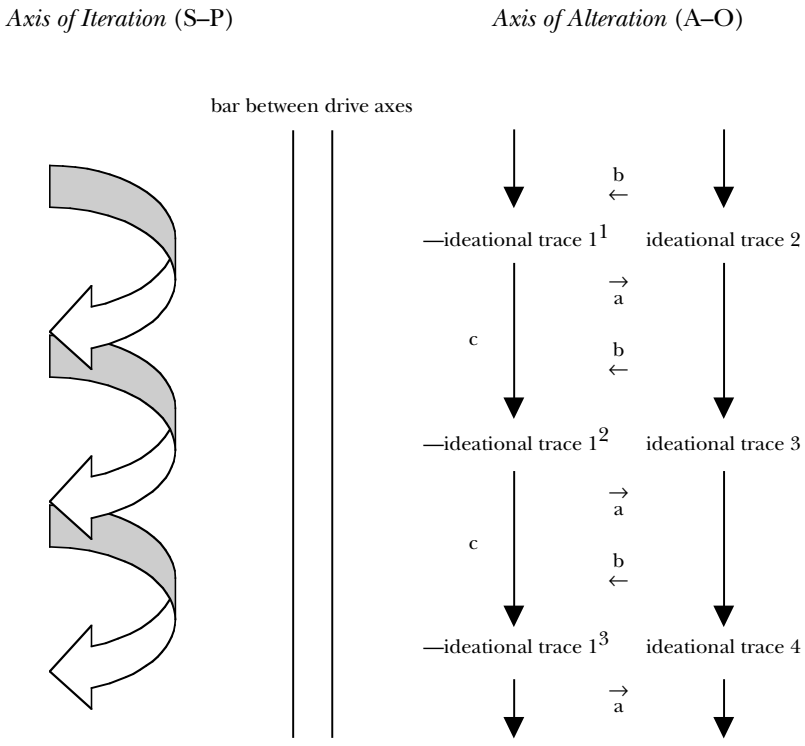
In terms of the basic framework of metapsychology, Freud delineates two fundamental types of conflict disturbing yet organizing mental life—the conflict between drives and reality (as, most notably, the struggle between the id and civilization) and the conflict between the drives themselves (*à la* the story of *Eros* against the *Todestrieb*). In both cases, the individual tends to be portrayed as the overdetermined plaything of powerful forces fighting semi-covert wars with each other just out of the ego's sight. However, Freud fails to discover a third dimension of conflict in relation to the libidinal economy—the conflict within each and every drive. The theoretical contribution of this project could easily be summarized as the identification of this distinct type of conflict and the explication of its sobering consequences for an understanding of the psyche.

Despite the apparent bleakness and antiutopianism of an assessment of human nature as being perturbed by an irreducible inner antagonism, there is, surprisingly, what might be described as a liberating aspect to this splitting of the drives. Since drives are essentially dysfunctional, subjects are able to act otherwise than as would be dictated by instinctually compelled pursuits of gratification, satisfaction, and pleasure. In fact, subjects are forced to be free, since, for such beings, the mandate of nature is forever missing. Severed from a strictly biological master-program and saddled with a conflict-ridden, heterogeneous jumble of contradictory impulses—impulses mediated by an inconsistent, unstable web of multiple representations, indicated by Lacan's "barring" of the Symbolic Other—the *parlêtre* has no choice but to bump up against the unnatural void of its autonomy. The confrontation with this void is frequently avoided. The true extent of one's autonomy is, due to its sometimes-frightening implications, just as often relegated to the shadows of the unconscious as those heteronomous factors secretly shaping conscious thought and behavior.

The contradictions arising from the conflicts internal to the libidinal economy mark the precise places where a freedom transcending mundane materiality has a chance to briefly flash into effective existence; such points of breakdown in the deterministic nexus of the drives clear the space for the sudden emergence of something other than the smooth continuation of the default physical and sociopsychical "run of things." Moreover, if the drives were fully functional—and, hence, would not prompt a

mobilization of a series of defensive distancing mechanisms struggling to transcend this threatening corpo-Real—humans would be animalistic automatons, namely, creatures of nature. The pain of a malfunctioning, internally conflicted libidinal economy is a discomfort signaling a capacity to be an autonomous subject. This is a pain even more essential to human autonomy than what Kant identifies as the guilt-inducing burden of duty and its corresponding pangs of anxious, awe-inspiring respect. Whereas Kant treats the discomfort associated with duty as a symptom-effect of a transcendental freedom inherent to rational beings, the reverse might (also) be the case: Such freedom is the symptom-effect of a discomfort inherent to libidinal beings. Completely "curing" individuals of this discomfort, even if it were possible, would be tantamount to divesting them, whether they realize it or not, of an essential feature of their dignity as subjects. As Lacan might phrase it, the split *Trieb* is the *sinthome* of subjectivity proper, the source of a suffering that, were it to be entirely eliminated, would entail the utter dissolution of subjectivity itself. Humanity is free precisely insofar as its pleasures are far from perfection, insofar as its enjoyment is never absolute.

# Appendix A: The Drive Graph




## Explication of the Drive Graph

1. *The Axis of Iteration (S–P)*

The cyclical pattern of the arching arrows represents the recurrent "demand for (psychical) work" exerted by both drive-source and drive-pressure. The quasi-somatic drive-source repeatedly insists upon what Freud, in the language of his energetic model, terms a "discharge of a

quota of excitation." In the case of drive-source, a certain satisfaction achieved at the level of aim and/or object is the condition for such discharge. (Hence, the axis of iteration is always mediated by the axis of alteration.)

Drive-pressure is included under the heading of the axis of iteration since it invariably accompanies the drive-source. In particular, when the demands of the drive-source go unmet, an increase in unpleasurable affect (pain and/or anxiety) serves as the "signal" of the drive's insistence upon discharge. Thus, at each peak in the arc of the arrows (serving here as visual representations of both source and pressure), the avatars of drive-pressure (namely, negative affects) are operative.

Furthermore, the cyclicality of this model should be taken to depict the temporal structure of this axis of the drive. Despite the constant permutations and modifications to which the drive representatives (or, "signifiers") of the axis of alteration are subjected, the axis of iteration pays no heed to such changes. This is the dimension of psychical life that never tires of demanding the "eternal return of the same satisfaction." Freud refers to it by various names—the homeostatic principle of energetic constancy, the indestructible infantile wish, the conservative character of drive, and, finally, the "daemonic" repetition of the *Todestrieb*.

By focusing on this aspect of drive in its temporal dimension, the questions about whether or not the drive can be assimilated to biology become secondary or even superfluous. This is especially important when discussing the drive-source, since this facet of the drive's structure is the most likely candidate for those in favor of seeking innate instinctual energies via psychoanalysis. In his metapsychological exposition of the drive, Freud deliberately leaves the issue of the drive's locus suspended: *Trieb* is a borderline concept, ambiguously hovering somewhere between soma and psyche. Examining the drive along temporal lines permits preserving the borderline quality of drive—this "in-between" status should be construed as part of this concept's valuable uniqueness, as opposed to being perceived as an indecision to be rectified—while nonetheless fundamentally recasting it through an emphasis on issues largely ignored by Freud himself (more specifically, issues having to do with time and temporality).

### 2. *The Axis of Alteration (A–O)*

Before discussing how this axis works as a whole, commentary on certain details of this part of the graph are necessary. First, the phrase "ideational trace" is chosen to provisionally cover a wide range of psychoanalytic concepts—mnemic traces, drive representatives, word- and/or thing-

presentations, and Lacanian signifiers (including the "unary trait" and the "letter"). In fact, Lacan's generalized use of "signifier"—his understanding of this term involves extending its scope well beyond the restricted domain of linguistics as a particular field—is closest to what is meant here by "ideational trace." That is, any psychical element is a signifier to the extent that its value/meaning is determined by a network of differential relations obtaining between it and other elements. "Signifierness" is a matter of relational functions, not something dependent upon the elements thus structured being linguistic per se. For example, a visual memory trace is an unconscious signifier insofar as its significance in a psychical economy depends on its interactive ties with other traces; it doesn't have to be a word (or word-presentation) to operate in this capacity. (The clearest illustrations of the signifier-quality of all types of psychical materials are to be found in the "deferred action" [*après-coup*] of hysterical trauma and the temporal dialectic between past and present exemplified by screen memories.) In the specific case of this drive model here, ideational traces qua signifiers can be understood as the cathected representations of aims and objects (with these representations being subject to the slippages and displacements characteristic of such differentially defined elements).

In order to explain the numbering of each ideational trace ($1^1$–2, $1^2$–3, $1^3$–4 . . .), the interaction designated by the arrows lettered "a," "b," and "c" requires elucidation. One of the most basic theses advocated by Freudian psychoanalysis is that past experience influences (and often overdetermines) the present. In the case of the drives, past objects participate in generating a template that dictates the course of subsequent object-choices. (Freud's usual example is the mother figure's influence on a male individual's adult relationships.) However, through various other phenomena—screen memories, deferred action, day-residues in the dream-work, and so on—Freud is forced to acknowledge the influence of the present on the past. Assuming that ideational traces indeed do behave as signifiers, a *point de capiton* dynamic (visible in many of Freud's own concepts, apart from Lacan's interpretations) permits later materials to alter the significance of the very past that supposedly influences the present context. In this manner, despite the frequent psychoanalytic simplification where the present is entirely shaped by the past with no possibility of reciprocal influence, an unstable dialectical tension exists between past and present ideational traces. Thus, arrow "a" represents the influence of past ideational traces on present ones, while arrow "b" represents the retroactive alteration of past traces by subsequent ones.

Arrow "c" indicates the transformations that an original, past ideational trace undergoes through successive interactions with new traces

accumulated over the time of the subject's lived history (the process that Freud refers to as "re-transcription"). In being put in relation (a→←b) with ideational trace 2, ideational trace $1^1$ undergoes a shift (↓c) in its psychical value/significance, becoming ideational trace $1^2$ (ideational trace $1^\circ$, not depicted here in the graph, would be the irrecoverable Freudian "lost object" and/or the Lacanian *das Ding*). A well-known analytic notion might make this clearer. As numerous authors have stressed (most notably, Lacan and Laplanche), the memory of a traumatic scene can behave like a "time bomb." This scene contains the potential to be treated as, most frequently, a sexual trauma (such as childhood seduction). However, the remembered scene is not legible in its traumatic guise until the introduction of a second, later scene bearing an associational similarity with the original memory. Only then, through the retroactive *après-coup* at work between two traces, does the first scene become the repressed nucleus of a symptom. In the symbolic vocabulary of this graph, the nonrepressed, pretraumatic version of the memory trace (ideational trace $1^1$), through its associational links with a second scene (the a→←b interaction between it and ideational trace 2), becomes (↓c) a repressed, traumatic memory (ideational trace $1^2$, with the change from $^1$ to $^2$ representing the signifying transubstantiation of a single trace [1]).

Finally, the vertical movement of the arrows on the furthest right-hand side (linking 2, 3, 4 . . .) simply stands for the passage of time in terms of the succession of object-choices and aim-inhibitions occurring over the historicized, ontogenetic unfolding of the drives. Unlike the axis of iteration, in which the passage of time has little to no influence, the axis of alteration is the site of perpetual change (given the susceptibility of the *Vorstellungen* of the drive to modification).

### 3. *The Bar between the Drive Axes*

The final version of Freud's theory ends with pitting two fundamental drives against each other—*Eros* (the life drive) and *Todestrieb* (the death drive). However, after viewing the four facets of the drive's essential metapsychological structure—presumably, both the life and death drives meet these definitional criteria for being drives—the division of the drives into two general classes might be perceived as too hasty. In particular, inquiring into the temporal organization of the various components of the drive (source, pressure, aim, and object) allows one to perceive a more primary conflict internal to the very metapsychological structure of drive itself.

On the one hand, the axis of iteration ignores temporally wrought

change in its blind insistence upon the repetition of an originary satisfaction. (In Lacanian parlance, this axis tirelessly seeks the impossible, inaccessible, and forever lost *das Ding* of the Real.) And yet, on the other hand, the medium through which this repetition is necessarily sought always–already thwarts the possibility of a pure repetition of the same. Why is this the case? Psychoanalysis participates in introducing a theory of the historicized subject; subjectivity does not come "ready made," but arises out of an experiential, structuring milieu. Thus, as Julia Kristeva puts it, the subject of psychoanalysis is "in process." As such, since the dividing line between subject and object is a genetically constructed one, the "same" object is never experienced in exactly the same manner. In the earliest experience of satisfaction at the breast, this being the point at which the oral drive is inaugurated by its first object cathexis, the breast is probably not experienced as an object in the sense of a separate, distinct object standing against a fully-formed, demarcated ego. But, the "same" breast, when encountered through a subjective frame of experience that has undergone certain constitutive shifts (for example, the mirror stage), fails to adequately re-present the initial, nonobjectival breast-experience. This temporal loss between two experiences of the same object (a loss designated by Lacan's *objet petit a*) is to be situated as an inevitable effect internal to the signifying dynamic of the axis of alteration. Hence, this axis prohibits the unmediated recovery of the archaic lost Thing demanded by the axis of iteration.

In the graph, despite the visual location of the bar, each peak of the arching arrows under the heading of the axis of iteration designates the point at which the drive-source meets with drive-objects qua drive representatives. The conjunction of the peak of each arc with the ideational trace horizontally to its right signifies the moment when S–P achieves discharge through A–O. But, it must be noted that each time S–P meets with a drive representative (an ideational trace), the representative is different than the previous one ($1^1$, $1^2$, $1^3$ . . .). Consequently, the bar between the drive axes represents not so much a spatial or topographical disjunction as an irreducible discrepancy between temporal organizations, a difference rendering the two axes, running at different speeds, perpetually out of synch with each other. This difference is the splitting of the drive.

# Appendix B: Post-Lacanian Theories of the Drive

## §1 Serge Leclaire—The Phenomenological Genesis of Drive Structure

At the 1960 Bonneval Colloquium on the unconscious (organized by Henri Ey, one of Lacan's psychiatric associates), Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire deliver a jointly authored paper entitled "The Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Study." The paper is divided into five chapters: Laplanche signs his name to the first, second, and fourth chapters; Leclaire claims responsibility for the third and fifth chapters. At the time, these are two of Lacan's best students, his most apt and articulate pupils. However, they disagree with each other about their relationship to Lacan.[1] Leclaire presents a powerful clinical illustration of Lacan's theses about the "agency of the signifier" in the unconscious—his unicorn dream and its signifier "Poordjeli." Laplanche, on the other hand, launches a critique of the Lacanian prioritization of language with respect to the unconscious. This marks Laplanche's permanent break with Lacan.

In "The Unconscious," Leclaire espouses two central axioms of Lacanian drive theory: One, drive and desire are to be distinguished; two, in terms of the unconscious, only the representational aspect of *Trieb* is important (as opposed to its energetic and/or affective features). As regards the difference between drive and desire, Leclaire understands "drive" in a quasi-Freudian sense, as a "constant force of a biological nature."[2] Leclaire erroneously downplays the nonsomatic dimension of *Trieb,* thus rendering it virtually equivalent to instinct. He does this perhaps in order to emphasize the distinctiveness of desire. He defines desire as a "properly psychical force" insofar as it is oriented not around the gratification of organic needs, but around "the perception of pleasure and unpleasure."[3]

Leclaire then reiterates that the drive, on its own, doesn't enter the sphere of psychical life. As stipulated by Freudian metapsychology, one never encounters the "naked *Trieb.*" Drives always drape themselves in a representational fabric:

> It is emphasized that the drive, properly speaking, has no place in mental life. Repression does not bear on it, it is neither conscious nor unconscious and it enters into the circuit of mental life only through the mediation of the '*(Vorstellungs-)Repräsentanz*.' This is a rather unusual term of which it must be immediately said that in Freud's usage, it is often found in divided form as one of its two components. We will translate this composite expression by 'ideational representative' and we shall inquire into the nature of this mediation, through which the drive enters into (one could even say 'is captured by') mental life. (Laplanche and Leclaire 1972, 144)

This passage is an announcement of the problematic to which Leclaire devotes his subsequent work—the relationship between a bodily *Trieb* and the signifying matrix of the Lacanian unconscious (Leclaire certainly conceives of "mental life" primarily in terms of the Symbolic). Leclaire addresses the bond between soma and psyche, from within a Lacanian framework, vis-à-vis the concept of "the letter." Furthermore, Leclaire implicitly demonstrates that Lacan's conception of structure does not ignore or exclude a phenomenological dimension in analytic theory (bodily affects and sensations, the personal-historical experience of the individual analysand, the idiosyncrasy of the particular unconscious, and so on).

Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* divides the drives into three core categories—oral, anal, and genital. Although Freud underscores the plasticity of the psyche's libidinal economy (based on an infantile "polymorphous perversity" as the universal foundation of sexuality), he nonetheless assumes that the anatomical organization of the human body predestines specific erotogenic zones to play a dominant part in sexual life. All the multiple permutations of drives are grouped together according to the basic drive-types of orality, anality, and genitality. A physiological structure is the ultimate origin and organizer of the distribution of libido. (Leclaire argues against the early Freud's narrow definition of erotogenic zones by claiming that any part of the body can become a central organizer of the libidinal economy.)[4] This structure is anterior to any particular libidinal state of affairs, and it shapes the possible subsequent vicissitudes of the drives. At least as of 1905, Freud undeniably asserts that anatomy steers destiny.

Similarly, Lacan is often perceived as prioritizing the role of a quasi-transcendental structure at the expense of the phenomenological, experiential particularities of the analysand (although, unlike the early Freud, this structure is far from being anything somatic). Such concepts as the "symbolic order" and "the desire of the Other" are frequently interpreted

as meaning that a network of signifiers preexisting the individual subject is responsible for molding the unconscious. In fact, Lacan construes Laplanche and Leclaire's 1960 paper as accusing him of this "depersonalization" of the unconscious (he comments on this matter in the 1969 preface to Anika Lemaire's dissertation).[5] A typical basis for criticisms of Lacan is precisely this alleged neglect of the first-person qualities of the analysand's lived history in favor of the transindividual, synchronic framework of the big Other, a symbolic order devoid of both body and affect.

Leclaire strives to achieve a viable compromise between pseudo-Lacanian structuralism and alternate viewpoints stressing the resistance of individual experience to any form of theoretical "reductionism." In focusing on the relationship between Freud's erotogenic zones and Lacan's logic of the signifier, Leclaire demonstrates that "structure" is not anathema to a first-person account of the unconscious, nor to an analytic conceptualization of embodiment. He states:

> To retain the term *structural* and use it without reservation in referring to the unconscious and the whole psychic apparatus, it suffices obviously to declare that a correctly conceived structural approach intrinsically includes the study of this moment of engendering of *an* unconscious, analogous in its structure and different in its determinations. But one must also, then, draw the consequences from there and include in this point of view the study of the moment of renewal and engendering. (Leclaire 1998b, 125)

As regards the libidinal economy, Leclaire's cautions about "a correctly conceived structural approach" indicate that the erotogenic zones around which the drives revolve do not issue either as readymade from the body's anatomy or ex nihilo from the signifiers of the Symbolic big Other. He contends that the structure of the unconscious' organization of the drives is the result of what is, initially, a phenomenological origin: The experience of intense sensations and/or affects (what Leclaire calls a "limit experience") is the "moment of engendering of *an* unconscious" (not "the" unconscious, but "*an*" unconscious). That is to say, a contingent experience in the lived history of the individual subject is responsible for inaugurating a particular *Trieb*.

Leclaire provides examples of what he terms "moments of fixation," namely, limit experiences in which a "letter" marking the erotogenic value of a body part is fixed. In all of these examples, the unconscious attaches itself to an experiential facet of the event during which a permutation of the libidinal economy is engendered:

> To develop more clearly what we want to bring out here, let us resort to simple situations, and, as a starting point, why not take a painful circumstance, a sudden rise in tension? In the confusion of pain, bordering on a swoon, that marks the collision against a stony ledge, all that remains, or that continues to be exacerbated, is the sweet smell of the honeysuckle climbing in nearby bushes. It is then as if, in the shock of this near dislocation brought on by the irruption of pain, at the limit of a loss of consciousness the smell of honeysuckle stood out as the only distinct term, which therefore comes to mark the instant immediately preceding the fainting spell or the secondary pain—the very instant in which all coherence seemed to be annulled at the same time as it maintained itself around this mere odor. Conversely, let us represent the syncope of pleasure in an orgasm . . . imagine the lover with her head thrown back, at the high point of lovemaking's pleasure, whose lost gaze fixes in her fathomless eye the doubly reversed image outlined in the daylight from the window, by curtains drawn closed but still held in loose tiebacks. With such examples, we will have isolated in its contingency the very trait that seems to fixate the syncope of pleasure. (Leclaire 1998b, 94–95)

For Freud, Lacan, and Leclaire as well, the drives intrinsically entail repetition compulsion. Their conservative side insists on the iteration of past experiences. Unlike the later Freud, who speculates that the ultimate point of drive fixation is the period prior to the emergence of organic life—an absolute past as the telos of a fundamentally regressive *Trieb*—Leclaire more reasonably asserts that lived experiences of marked intensity form the coordinates of libidinal orientation for the drives. The interests of the conservative side of drive are served by selecting a particular trait from the initial limit experience. This trait represents the affective magnitude of the prior experience, and a repetition of this past magnitude is sought by following the thread of the trait qua iterable mark.[6]

What is a "letter" for Leclaire? A letter is precisely an iterable mark steering the course of the drives' vicissitudes. But, how is this concept different from previous psychoanalytic musings on erotogenic functions? A letter is neither a cathected object (that is, an extraneous entity in external reality) nor simply an erotogenic zone (the corporeal site of affective, bodily intensities). If it were either of these two things, the concept of the letter would merely amount to a superficial renaming of extant analytic notions. Instead, this concept is the means by which Leclaire negotiates a balance between phenomenological and structuralist approaches to psychoanalytic theory. How is this so?

The letter is a feature abstracted from the experience of the object and/or event during which an affective intensity linked to a specific part

of the body is first encountered. In the examples offered by Leclaire, incidental and contingent elements (such as a scent present in a scene where the individual is overwhelmed by pain, or a reflection in the eye of one's lover seen at the moment of orgasm) become frozen in the unconscious as the iterable "signifiers" by which the drives recognize the affective magnitudes they seek to re-find:

> The study of this moment of fixation in any case indicates more clearly *what must be understood by the letter,* in the sense in which it is taken to be constitutive of the unconscious order. It is indeed a matter of a *formally identifiable term,* one whose intrinsic and paradoxical nature is to be this materiality abstracted from the body and distinct from the object. It is the trait that scans the empty moment of a syncope and connotes in another place, in a paradoxical fashion, the indiscernible interval of a difference. It is the trait that fixes in a foreign register what seems incapable of being inscribed, namely, *jouissance* as annulment, which is accomplished in an evanescent fashion by the moment of pleasure. (Leclaire 1998b, 96)

Despite the fact that the letter, as a repeatable trait or erotic refrain, takes shape through a phenomenological/experiential process within the field of the subject's lived history (instead of surfacing readymade as a product of biological, linguistic, or sociocultural orders), it subsequently functions in a structural manner given its signifier-like qualities. In other words, Leclaire folds the phenomenal object/event and the structural letter onto each other—"we can foresee the profoundly intricate relation of the letter and the object, which we will therefore call their *intrication*" (Leclaire 1998b, 52). The object/event, first encountered in an initial moment of fixation, provides the contingent trait whose imprint thereafter operates as a letter. Similarly, in a reciprocal fashion, the letter thus engendered exercises a power of determination over subsequent object cathexes. A frozen moment of the individual's experience becomes elevated into a transexperiential template, a coordinate establishing a range of eidetic variations for a given drive.[7] Leclaire describes the letter as the ghost of the lost object, a "phantom screen" (*cache-fantôme de l'objet*) remaining in the unconscious.[8] In Lacanian parlance, the *tuché* of the earliest chance encounter with the prototypical drive-object is a contingency that, nonetheless, is always–already destined to the necessity of the letter by virtue of an unconscious Symbolic *automaton.* Leclaire thus sketches what Lacan would call the spectral "lost cause" of the unconscious.

Considering his theoretical allegiance to Lacan, one might suppose that Leclaire, despite his reinterpretation of the meaning of structure in

relation to libidinal life, nevertheless privileges Lacan's linguistics (or, more accurately, his *linguisterie*) at the expense of approaches centered on affectivity and embodiment. Why else employ the loaded term "letter"? This supposition is incorrect for several reasons. To begin with, in "The agency of the letter" (1957), Lacan designates "the 'letter'" as "the essentially localized structure of the signifier" (Lacan 1977f, 153). Leclaire, in emphasizing what he calls the "moment of engendering of *an* unconscious," highlights the fact that Lacan's "localized structure" indicates that what the psychoanalyst interprets is not merely the residual by-product of a transcendent symbolic order. Structuralist psychoanalysis, taking into account the bond between soma (as the erotogenically charged body) and psyche (as the signifiers of unconscious thought) vis-à-vis the concept of the letter, is capable of analyzing formations emblematic of the idiosyncrasy of the unconscious.

Additionally, by permitting sensory impressions to function as letters, Leclaire reveals the absurdity of reading Lacan's references to linguistics too literally. Lacan is frequently attacked for reducing the unconscious to nothing more than a mere jumble of words. According to this accusation, Lacan thereby ignores Freudian energetics and also thwarts the articulation of a psychoanalytic theory of embodiment. Leclaire succeeds in demonstrating that Lacanian structure is best conceived of as translinguistic: Unconscious materials are signifiers insofar as, regardless of whether they are traces of words, scents, or images, they have a psychical significance strictly by virtue of their interconnections with other materials forming the structure of the unconscious. Limiting these materials to being linguistic signifiers in the strict sense is both deceptive and untenable. During a closed session of Lacan's twelfth seminar, Leclaire states, "When I speak about the pure materiality of the signifier I am designating here the opposed couple of two elements: no doubt to constitute a signifier it matters little whether these elements are acoustic, graphic or tactile" (Leclaire, in *SXII,* 3/31/65).

Apart from exhibiting the compatibility between Lacanian theory and investigations into the role of the body in psychical life, Leclaire's work underlines two important features of *Trieb*. First, he shows how the representational dimension of *Trieb* (namely, the ideational traces constituting the aim-object axis) is partially a product of the demand for repetition issuing from the source-pressure axis. The drives insist on repeating prior experiences, experiences involving intense sensations and/or affects. In order to pursue this repetition, the drives require an iterable mark organizing the effort at reincarnating this past. Thus, they latch onto an arbitrary emblem, which, being an iterable mark revealing itself in a variety of later situations/entities, permits the modified reactivation

of the lost sensation or affect. The contingent events of the individual's lived history erotogenically charge his/her body in unpredictable ways; not only are limit experiences accidents befalling the individual (for example, a chance sexual encounter or a random injury), but the traits fixated in the course of such experiences are often marginal, incidental facets of the experience (for instance, a scent or color that just so happens to be perceived at the same time as the intensity of pleasure or pain is registered). For Leclaire, the unconscious is constituted on the basis of these chance interfaces between soma and psyche, sensation and structure.

Second, as is clear from the above explanation of the contingent nature of the letter, the object-choices of drives are neither determined by organic need nor by a quasi-biological, developmental sequence of sexual stages (as implied by the early Freud of the *Three Essays*). With the introduction of the mediation of the letter in the libidinal economy, Leclaire contends that the subject enters the realm of desire proper:

> It is worthwhile . . . to recall that when Freud attempts to define the movement he calls desire or wish (*Wunsch*), he evokes the mnemic image of a perception (*Erinnerungsgbild einer Wahrnehmung*), whose cathexis (*Besetzung*) reactualizes the perception and constitutes the realization of the desire. Thus, for example, thanks to the excitation produced by the actualization of a basic need such as thirst, the recathected memory of the act of drinking that quenches thirst would cause to reappear the perception of milk or water so as to fulfill the wish.
>
> We see that the object that puts the wish in play is radically distinguished from the object that supplies the satisfaction of a need. Whereas the object of need may easily be conceived on the model of salt that allows the rechloridation of a dehydrated organism, or of sugar that puts an end to hypoglycemic coma, the object of desire must be conceived in an altogether different manner. (Leclaire 1998b, 43)

The initial experience of the satisfaction of a need may very well involve a pleasurable intensity of sufficient strength for the inauguration of a letter cathexis. But, since the letter is a trait typically incidental when considered with respect to the causes (organic need) and effects (sensations resulting from the gratification of need) operative in such experiences, it later leads the drive astray—that is, it leads it onto the track of desire. For example, in Leclaire's view, the phenomenological features of the particular breast met with by the infant (instead of the milk as the actual object of biological need) become structurally fixed in the unconscious as the guide posts for the subsequent object-choices of the oral drive. These sedimented features, being neither essential to the organic level of hunger nor instinc-

tually predetermined, are the focal point of analytic interpretation—the analyst searches for the letters embedded in the unconscious. In the above quotation, Leclaire also alludes to Freud's musings on the tie between the "mnemic image of a perception" and the force of unconscious wishes. This allusion requires a discussion of the function of hallucination in the workings of *Trieb,* a discussion more thoroughly developed by Laplanche.

## §2 Jean Laplanche—The Hallucinatory Foundations of the Libidinal Economy

Freud's speculations about infantile states of experience lying at the base of the libidinal economy leads him to hypothesize the existence of hallucinatory mechanisms activated in the absence of an object demanded by the drive. In *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Freud posits that the arousal of somatic needs, later designated as drive-sources, disturbs the infant's psychical "state of rest." These needs, like the drive-sources, are a constant (as opposed to momentary) force, an internal stimulus from which evasive flight is impossible. The quelling of this stimulus through the achievement of satisfaction is linked to the presentation of certain mnemic images (ideational traces of the object corresponding to the need). Freud contends that, in the absence of the actual object itself being physically presented to the helpless, dependent child, the child hallucinates the presence of the gratifying thing—prior to the process of reality testing, this is the earliest sort of defense mechanism employed by the psyche against pain. The pleasure principle utilizes wishful thinking in a desperate attempt to alleviate the discomfort resulting from the unmet demands of *Trieb.*[9]

Later, in the 1911 "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," Freud asserts that the original mode of achieving satisfaction is actually wishful hallucinating motivated by the internal stimuli of the drives. (He reaffirms the fact of the chronological/developmental priority of hallucination in the 1925 paper "Negation.")[10] Initially, the psyche tries to gratify somatic needs through the imagined presence of satisfying objects. Only with the eventual, inevitable failure of these hallucinations to silence the unpleasurable demands of the drives are these wish-products abandoned:

> I suggest that the state of psychical rest was originally disturbed by the peremptory demands of internal needs. When this happened, whatever was thought of (wished for) was simply presented in a hallucinatory

> manner, just as still happens to-day with our dream-thoughts every night. It was only the non-occurrence of the expected satisfaction, the disappointment experienced, that led to the abandonment of this attempt at satisfaction by means of hallucination. Instead of it, the psychical apparatus had to decide to form a conception of the real circumstances in the external world and to endeavour to make a real alteration in them. A new principle of mental functioning was thus introduced; what was presented in the mind was no longer what was agreeable but what was real, even if it happened to be disagreeable. This setting-up of the *reality principle* proved to be a momentous step. (*SE* 12: 219)

The infant gradually learns to distinguish concocted semblances from actual objects by virtue of the inability of the hallucinations to gratify the stimuli generated by the unsatisfied drive-sources. In this instance, reality testing isn't so much a matter of the child engaging in an active comparison between imaginary and real entities, but a residual by-product of the failure of the pleasure principle's original mechanisms. The reality principle is established only after the psyche proves incapable of internally regulating itself through an aborted effort at sustaining an enclosed, autosatisfactory system. Its own internal stimuli eventually force it to recognize the difference between fantasy and reality.

Laplanche considers this hypothesis of "primal hallucinations" to be one of Freud's most important notions. Laplanche implicitly advances three theses deriving from the metapsychological relationships between the unconscious, *Trieb,* and hallucination: One, hallucination introduces the gap separating organic instinct (somatic needs) from psychical drive/desire (sexualized fixations beyond mere physical requirements); two, if the unconscious is truly incapable of forgetting elements of the past, then the dawning of the reality principle does not liquidate hallucinations from the psychical system (Freud agrees to the extent that he sees dreams as evidence of the persistence of hallucinatory wish fulfillments in the adult psyche[11]); and, three, if *Trieb* is essentially conservative, then hallucinations, as the earliest scenarios cathected by the infantile libidinal economy, are what the drives seek to recover. In Laplanche's view, Freud's musings on neonate psychical states necessitate conceiving of the libidinal economy as erected upon fantasmatic foundations. Since both fantasy and reality are encountered as representations by the psyche, and since the unconscious ignores the difference between the two types of representations, "unreal" elements are obviously capable of playing an utterly central and decisive role in the psyche's functions.[12]

Just as Lacan considers the biological fact of prematuration to be a vital catalyst in the formation of both an ego and a reliance on others, so

too does Laplanche see the infant's prolonged helplessness as responsible for the prevalence of hallucinations in early life. Since humans are born inadequately equipped to meet their organic needs, they are quickly derailed from instinct due to a "leaning" upon two supports: fantasies of satisfaction and relationships with others. When the (m)other does not or will not immediately present milk to the child who kicks and screams due to the stimuli arising from the unmet demands of the oral drive-source, the child hallucinates a fantasy scenario in which the breast is at its command:

> *The experience of satisfaction* is incomprehensible if it is not related to the biological fact of prematuration. It is, in fact, by dint of what Freud called *Hiflösigkeit*—i.e., his distress, his original impotence to help himself—that the human child cannot bring into operation the mechanisms grouped under the rubric of 'specific action,' which are nothing other than instinctual setups. The instinctual setups are insufficient, and in any event, they appear too late, with a gap: they are not there when one would expect: i.e., at birth. From birth onward, insofar as this gap subsists, there occurs a kind of *disqualification of the instinct:* the satisfaction of needs cannot pass through preestablished setups, that will emerge only gradually and according to the maturational rhythm of the central nervous system, but satisfaction must pass from the beginning through intersubjectivity; i.e., by way of another human, the mother . . . The signs accompanying satisfaction (the breast accompanying the offering of milk) will henceforth take on the value of a fixed arrangement, and it is that arrangement, a *fantasy* as yet limited to several barely elaborated elements, that will be repeated on the occasion of a subsequent appearance of need. (Laplanche 1976, 60)

Although he stringently rejects his Lacanian background, Laplanche, through his intertwining of intersubjectivity and fantasy—the (m)other's "refusal" to present the object of need gives rise to hallucination—implicates the desire of the Other in the emergence of drive. Along these lines, Laplanche distinguishes between *Trieb* (*la pulsion*) and "self-preservative needs" (*les grands besoins d'auto-conservation*).[13] Organic needs, essential to the physical survival of the infant, are dependent upon a natural object. Drives, on the other hand, appear when the Other upon whom the infant's needs are dependent doesn't answer to these needs, when the Other's desire shows itself to be beyond the powers of the demanding infant. Hunger is transformed into the oral drive per se when, instead of milk being physically ingested, the breast is visually hallucinated. This represents a shift from an "adaptive object" (milk) to a "contingent ob-

ject" (the image of the breast, as well as its various experiential facets that are eventually divorced from it in the multiple displacements of sublimation). The adaptive object is the object of need, whereas the contingent object is the object of sexuality, broadly construed—"Adaptive object in the case of self-preservation, contingent object in relation to the aim . . . in the case of sexuality" (Laplanche 1980c, 51).[14]

Laplanche goes on to argue that the primal hallucinations constituting the foundation of the drives are not eliminated by the later onset of the reality principle. Given their allegedly primal status, these fantasmatic fabrications, generated in a state of drive-induced duress, subsist within the "atemporal core" of the unconscious as fixed fragments. Such preserved fantasies constitute the source-objects of the drives, perpetually agitating the libidinal economy.[15] The driving force of fundamental fantasmatic formations replaces the organic motor of need:

> The 'hallucination' does not substitute an imaginary real for the real, or one form of food for another . . . A so-called primary hallucination feeds no one; the hallucination is not a substitute for reality; it represents the birth of fantasy . . . No primary hallucination (if there is such a thing) can be destroyed . . . (Laplanche 1989, 78)

Laplanche thus treats reality testing—the later surrendering of hallucinations as fictive—as a first form of aim-inhibition. That is to say, instead of abandoning the initial cathexis of the imagined entity due to its irreality, the drive seeks subliminatory substitutes for the lost hallucinatory object of desire. The concrete, tangible objects of need are thereby demoted to being mere stand-ins for ephemeral, fantasmatic things.

Laplanche contributes a new angle to Lacan's account of object loss in terms of *objet petit a*. For Lacan, two basic mechanisms are responsible for the inevitable loss of *das Ding:* One, genetic modifications in the structure of the subject correlatively modify the constitution of the object (the phenomenological, Imaginary account); two, the intervention of representational mediation interferes with access to the Real Thing (the structural, Symbolic account). To this list, Laplanche adds a third mechanism: The Real Thing was never really "real" to begin with, being instead a fantasy/hallucination relegated to the unconscious with the onset of the reality principle's dominance.

Object *a* represents the permanent quota of dissatisfaction sustaining the perpetual movement of desire. Its motto is "that's not it" (*ce n'est pas ça*). Each object met with is never quite equivalent to *das Ding*, leaving the drives to protest that the substitute isn't what is being sought. In focusing on the relationship between fantasy and drive, Laplanche inadver-

tently shows how the logic of object *a* introduces a subtle twist to the Freudian theme of "reality." For Freud, reality testing is the ability of consciousness to discern the difference between fantasy and reality; Freud emphasizes that the child, once its psyche acquiesces to the constraints of the reality principle, will eventually shun the hallucinatory object in favor of the actual object.[16] Laplanche traces the origins of the *ce n'est pas ça* effect back to this early competition between fantasy and reality. However, unlike Freud, the conclusion he reaches is that while consciousness may eventually reject fantasy and accept the reign of reality, the unconscious does the exact opposite: The unconscious dimension of the libidinal economy invariably engages in "fantasy testing," rejecting outright the objects of reality (for example, the instinctual objects of need are rejected in favor of the sexualized objects of desire). The tragic fate of the drives is to continually seek the recovery of an archaic fantasy through the woefully inadequate defiles of reality. For the unconscious, the actual entities satisfying somatic requirements are the less than ideal semblances of those hallucinations cathected in the initial emergence of drive structure (instead of the hallucinations being the semblances of an underlying reality).

Are Laplanche's assertions about the fantasmatic foundations of *Trieb* compatible with the Lacanian *objet petit a*? Can Laplanche's theory be assimilated to the Lacanian model of drive? Žižek points out that these questions signal a bone of contention between the two thinkers—"The difference between Lacan and Laplanche is . . . crucial here: for Laplanche, drive is consubstantial with fantasy—that is to say, it is the very reflexive turn into phantasmatic 'internalization' which brings about the transformation of instinct into drive; for Lacan, on the contrary, there is a drive beyond fantasy" (Žižek 1999b, 287–288). In Lacan's view, fantasy is precisely that which veils from the subject the loss embodied by *objet petit a*. A fantasy is a scenario concealing from the fantasizing subject the fact that the object of desire is always–already lost due to the intrinsic structuration of the subject itself. (The matheme of fantasy, $\$ \lozenge a$, expresses the idea that fantasy is the attempt by the subject bereft of *das Ding* [$] to conjoin itself [◊] to the representative of this absence [*a*].)[17] Fantasy is thus a defensive device, a means of concealing the failure of desire to ever reach its object.

What is the connection between this discussion of fantasy and the specific case of hallucination? The Lacanian conception of fantasy endorses Freud's assumption that the infant hallucinates the satisfying object exclusively on the condition that the Thing withdraws itself from availability to perceptual awareness. Hallucinations are enlisted in the vain attempt to quell the drives only after the previously experienced source of gratification goes missing.[18] Hence, hallucinations are failed an-

swers to the demands of *Trieb.*[19] If one considers hallucination to be a subcategory of fantasy, then the drives are not erected on the basis of fantasy (as maintained by Laplanche).[20] Instead, fantasies are desperate attempts to flee the ceaseless recurrence of what Freud calls "internal stimuli" and what Lacan designates as the intrusive bodily Real with its untamed, disruptive *jouissance.*

Nonetheless, despite this disagreement as to whether *Trieb* and fantasy should be conjoined or kept separate, both Lacan and Laplanche endeavor to explain the same two truths of Freudian psychoanalysis: One, in human existence, instinct is always–already derailed in becoming drive; two, human beings are haunted by a perpetual margin of dissatisfaction (*ce n'est pas ça*). Jacques-Alain Miller describes how fantasy, as a construction of desire rather than drive, leads the libidinal economy off the path toward the successful achievement of gratification—"fantasy as misrecognition of the drive . . . as that by which desire sustains itself in order to misrecognize the direction pointed out to it by the drive (if desire followed the drive it would never lose its keys, but fantasy covers over the drive, and thus desire errs)" (Miller 1996d, 426). Although Laplanche argues that fantasy qua hallucination is the proper object of *Trieb,* his claim is essentially the same as Lacan's, namely, that the coloring of organic need by (sexual) desires leads the libidinal economy into a circuitous series of substitute objects unrelated to this somatic origin. Furthermore, both Lacan and Laplanche concur that, within later subliminatory object-choices, there is always some "x," something in the object more than the object itself. For Lacan, this "x" is *das Ding* as supposedly eclipsed by the advent of subjectivity; for Laplanche, this "x" is the primal hallucination against which all actual objects acquired by the drive are measured and found lacking. In either case, what these authors are struggling to express is the inherent failure of *Trieb,* its curse to never be able to get what it wants.

## §3 Julia Kristeva—Language, Drive, and the Semiotic Process

Like many thinkers shaped by the intellectual scene in Paris during the 1960s and 1970s, Julia Kristeva remains partially influenced by Lacan. In a series of interviews, she openly discusses the significance of Lacan's teachings for her own development.[21] References to psychoanalysis and Lacan are prevalent throughout her writings, especially in her thesis *Revolution in Poetic Language* (this early text lays the foundations for the entirety of her subsequent work).

However, Kristeva sees herself as breaking with Lacan along one major fault line, saying that Lacanian theory neglects *Trieb*. In one interview, she states:

> I am a member of the generation that was attracted to psychoanalysis because of Lacan's teachings, so I am very grateful to him. I find that the renewed emphasis he places on language and the symbolic is extremely important. Yet I believe that the Lacanians have neglected the role of the drive. The drive is clearly an imaginary construction (we can neither see it nor locate it), but it is an essential one that enables the analyst to remain at the crossroads between the symbolic and the somatic. (Kristeva 1996c, 87)

Especially considering the numerous perspectives from which Lacan himself approaches Freudian drive theory, this accusation seems hard to sustain against *le Séminaire* itself. (Perhaps she is accusing Lacan's followers, with some justification, of this neglect, since she says "Lacanians.") Kristeva here voices a criticism frequently directed against Lacan. The problem is that the Lacan criticized is a structuralist caricature based strictly upon the early seminars of the mid-1950s (the period of the primacy of the Symbolic and the obsession with Saussure). Given Lacan's reappraisal of the Real, beginning in the seventh seminar of 1959 to 1960, this alleged neglect of nonlinguistic phenomena is a rather dubious charge. In fact, Kristeva's misinterpretation of the Real is what enables her to conceive of the "semiotic" as a theoretical counterbalance to Lacan.

Kristeva's primary conceptual tool is her distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. When asked to situate this distinction in relation to the Lacanian R.S.I. triad, Kristeva, in spite of her reservations about the comparison, states:

> As far as Lacan's ideas go—the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic—I think it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to translate one theory into another theory, because if one does, one ends in confusion and loses the specificity of each author and each approach. So I would not like to perform this reduction. But it does seem to me that the semiotic—if one really wants to find correspondences with Lacanian ideas—corresponds to phenomena that for Lacan are both the real and the imaginary. For him the real is a hole, a void, but I think that in a number of experiences with which psychoanalysis is concerned—most notably, the narcissistic structure, the experience of melancholia or of catastrophic suffering, and so on—the appearance of the real is not necessarily a void. It is accompanied by a number of psychic inscriptions that are of the order of

> the semiotic. Thus perhaps the notion of the semiotic allows us to speak of the real without simply saying that it's an emptiness or a blank; it allows us to try to further elaborate it. (Kristeva 1996b, 22–23)

Leaving aside for now the issue of the Imaginary, Kristeva perceives Lacan as using the category of the Real in much the same way as Kant uses the notion of the noumenal *an sich* sphere beyond the limits of subjective experience: The Real is that which, in its anteriority to the Imaginary and the Symbolic, can only be delineated as an absence, blank, or hole in the signifying productions of the psyche. Many of Lacan's remarks support this reading. Furthermore, given the co-implication of the Real with both the Imaginary and the Symbolic (as per the Borromean knot model), Kristeva contends that the Real, despite its "impossible" status, is confined to participate in a (Symbolic) structure constructed on the basis of Lacan's formal–theoretical apparatus—"No matter how impossible the *real* might be . . . it finally becomes part of a topology with the *imaginary* and the *symbolic,* a part of that trinary hold from which nothing escapes, not even the 'hole,' since it too is part of the structure" (Kristeva 1983, 35).

Kristeva opposes her definition of the semiotic to what she portrays as the strict negativity/emptiness of the Real. Like the Real contra the Symbolic, the semiotic is that which is transstructural. In the case of signifying systems, the semiotic is that which perturbs the explicit linguistic scaffolding of grammar, logic, and communicable meaning. In her studies of poetic and literary employments of language, Kristeva contends that two axes are essential to these specific types of linguistic productions: One, the author utilizes the symbolic resources of his/her linguistic milieu (what Lacan might call the "signifying battery" of the symbolic order, namely, the syntactical and lexical elements of a given *langue* making possible enunciations of intersubjectively recognized meanings); two, in poetry and literature, the author infuses the structural skeleton of language with something that is "in language more than language itself." This nonthetic "x" is, precisely, the semiotic. Under the heading of the semiotic, Kristeva groups a series of related notions—libido, desire, drive, and affect.[22] Kristeva's central thesis is that signifying practices are always a combination, although not always a smooth synthesis, of the semiotic and the symbolic, the affective and the structural. Put differently, any text is simultaneously constituted by both a "genotext" (the infusion of libido, drives, and/or affects into a signifying medium) and a "phenotext" (the strictly formal, linguistic dimension of the explicit medium of signification).[23] For Kristeva, a perpetual struggle (a struggle always "in process") between the semiotic and the symbolic is the motor force that gives rise to various signifying acts.[24]

In this light, Kristeva asserts that Lacanian psychoanalysis fails to take into account the libidinal, affective factors (namely, the semiotic) traversing the enunciations of the speaking subject. That is to say, the analytic ear of Lacan evidently pays attention solely to the formal features of the *parlêtre* to the detriment of an understanding of such aspects as gesture, intonation, emotion, and so on. Kristeva considers the Lacanian subject of enunciation to be still too Cartesian, too divorced from the concrete field of body and affect.[25] And, since Kristeva frequently defines the semiotic in terms of the drives,[26] the indictment for the neglect of affect is a variation on the allegation that Lacan ignores *Trieb.* Of course, Lacan himself is in part responsible for this vision of his work. His 1950s reliance on structuralist linguistics, his 1960s fascination with formal logic (Russell, Frege, and so on), and his 1970s efforts to streamline psychoanalysis via mathematical topology all give the impression that the Lacanian subject is indeed a strictly Symbolic–structural function. Additionally, his sustained recourse to modern rationalism (Descartes, Kant, and Hegel in particular) further fuels criticisms to the effect that affect, body, and the like are excluded from Lacan's system.

Several objections are merited at this point. First, Kristeva seemingly forgets that the Freud she appeals to against Lacan—Freud as the theorist of libido and drive—explicitly rejects the idea of unconscious affects (with the sole exception being his later speculations about the existence of an unconscious sense of guilt). In her focus on signifying practices (primarily poetry and literature), Kristeva is amply justified in stressing the importance of affective features such as intonation, rhythm, and sonorous qualities for the meaning of the text in question. However, as regards psychoanalysis qua the study of the unconscious, it remains very much in question as to whether the formations of the unconscious are bound by the same rules as literary texts. Kristeva does not provide a metapsychological rationalization for the inclusion of affect in a theoretical account of the unconscious. Certainly, in analytic practice, the analyst should pay close attention to the semiotic features of a patient's monologue; Freud readily admits that affects are "signals" to the ego of the proximity of the repressed.[27] Lacan doesn't deny this—in fact, his register of the Imaginary is meant to encompass affective, emotive phenomena (and, in relegating the Imaginary to the level of the ego, he is close to Freud's own consignment of affect to the conscious self).[28] Lacan returns to the Freud who defines the unconscious not as a libidinal cauldron of quasi-somatic forces, but as an organized series of repressed mnemic traces.

A second objection here is that Kristeva's characterization of the Real as a strictly negative category is misleading. Paradoxically, the Real is simultaneously an absence, lack, or impasse in the Symbolic as well as a

positive force impinging upon the Symbolic. Žižek provides clarification on this point as follows:

> [F]or Lacan the 'Real' is *not,* in the Kantian mode, a purely negative category, a designation of a limit without any specification of what lies beyond—the Real *qua* drive is, on the contrary, the *agens,* the 'driving force,' of desiring . . .
>
> The Lacanian Thing is not simply the 'impossible' Real which withdraws into the dim recesses of the Unattainable with the entry of the symbolic order, it is the very universe of drives. (Žižek 1996b, 97)

Žižek's remarks on the Real can be rendered more concrete by examining the already delineated role of the body in the later Lacan. On the one hand, bodily needs set the libidinal economy of the subject in motion. Without this Real cause, there would be neither Imaginary nor Symbolic effects produced in terms of unconscious formations, symptoms, fantasies, desires, and so on. In this sense, the Real is the positivity of those driving forces preceding the structuration effectuated at the level of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. On the other hand, bodily needs are always–already mediated by nonsomatic factors. The *tuché* of need is a lost cause insofar as all needs are immediately routed through both nonnatural, phenomenally constituted objects (an Imaginary level) and sociostructural orders of subjective relations (a Symbolic level). In this sense, the Real is a negativity that remains irreducibly inaccessible in its pure state (at least for the analytic subject). This latter valence of the Real is its more Kantian side, as the "body-in-itself" simultaneously being a necessary presupposition of drive theory as well as a quasi-noumenal cause beyond the limits of (psychoanalytic) experience. Kristeva erroneously restricts the Lacanian Real to its Kantian aspect alone, ignoring its fundamental duplicity—"the real is the plentitude of inert, positive presence—'nothing is lacking' in the real, the lack being introduced there by symbolization. At the same time, the real is the *void,* the hole at the heart of the symbolic, the central lack around which the symbolic structures itself" (Žižek 1988, 77).

Another of Žižek's portrayals of the Real reveals the profound similarity between Kristeva's semiotic and this Lacanian concept. Speaking of the effects of the symbolic order on the Real body, Žižek states:

> [T]he Real . . . in a sense *precedes* the symbolic order and is subsequently structured by it when it gets caught in its network: this is the great Lacanian motif of symbolization as a process which mortifies, drains off, emp-

> ties, carves the fullness of the Real of the living body. But the Real is at the same time the product, remainder, leftover, scraps of this process of symbolization, the remnants, the excess which escapes symbolization and is as such produced by the symbolization itself. In Hegelian terms, the Real is simultaneously *presupposed* and *posed* by the symbolic. (Žižek 1989, 169)

The Žižekian Real is both apparently anterior to the Symbolic as well as a by-product or after-effect of this same Symbolic. Likewise, Kristeva's semiotic is a non-Symbolic category that, while seemingly a hypostatized "energy" or "force" outside of given linguistic networks, is nonetheless a phenomenon internal to this very network itself. Due to similar concerns as those voiced by Žižek apropos the possible misinterpretation of the Real as simply being chronologically prior in relation to the Symbolic, Kristeva repeatedly warns that the semiotic is strictly internal to the symbolic:

> [T]he position of the semiotic as heterogeneous does not derive from a desire to integrate, within a language often accused of being too 'abstract,' a supposed concreteness, a raw corporeality, or an immanent energy. To posit, as such, concrete and intuitive purities is undoubtedly a fantasm that appeals to medical rationality, which views language only for what it transmits as a reality principle—that is, (de)negation. On the contrary, as Hegel already knew, and as any analyst with ears can hear, it is the very process of abstraction and logic which gives us access to the most essential, the most hidden concreteness. (Kristeva 1983, 36–37)

As with the Real, Hegel is again invoked to clarify the nature of the semiotic. The semiotic is a "hidden concreteness" that exists as such only insofar as it forms a participatory ingredient of "the very process of abstraction and logic." After making this point, Kristeva continues, stating that, "Thus this semiotic mode has no primacy, no point of origin" (Kristeva 1983, 37). Instead, the semiotic becomes a "theoretical supposition" constructed from within the web of symbolic systems.[29] Its chronological anteriority is a retroactive positing effectuated from within the closure of signifying matrices.

Consequently, Kristeva endows the semiotic with the same "negative" status as the Lacanian Real. Both concepts refer to a nonstructural level that, while pressing upon the organizations of the symbolic order, is nevertheless inaccessible in any pure, isolated mode; both concepts refer to an "x" that, despite a presupposed chronological priority over structural dynamics, is simultaneously immanent to these very dynamics. Kris-

teva construes the Real solely in terms of Lacan's cautionary remarks that his category must not be hypostatized, namely, treated as some type of libidinal, preverbal *Stoff* (Kristeva issues these same warnings regarding the semiotic). She trumpets the advantages of her concept of the semiotic over the Real: The semiotic isn't merely an empty negativity, a simple "hole in the Symbolic." In so doing, Kristeva forgets that, like the semiotic, the Real is a nonsymbolized absence exclusively to the extent that it is a bodily, drive-like positivity immanently impinging upon the symbolic order.[30] If Lacan's stipulations about the inaccessibility of the Real (as the pound of flesh produced as a nonsymbolized remainder of the Symbolic) render the Real entirely negative, then the same fate befalls the semiotic. Why? Kristeva articulates identical qualifications concerning the semiotic: The semiotic is the not-quite-represented quota of bodily, affective charge that, although presumed responsible for generating the motility of signifying practices as a preceding cause, has no existence beyond these symbolic productions. In this sense, Kristeva's reservations regarding the negativity of the Real would apply to her as well.

The third and final objection to Kristeva's understanding of *Trieb* is that, in defining the semiotic, she indulges herself in an extremely loose series of equivocations. The semiotic is either one or all of the following—libido, desire, drive, and/or affect. Psychoanalytic theory is careful to draw distinctions between these terms, distinctions that can be glossed over only at the expense of the coherency of metapsychology. In particular, drives and affects are not the same things. At most, affects are, in this context, the expression of an unmet demand issuing from the drive-source. The negative affects associated with a dissatisfied drive-source are manifestations of drive-pressure. Kristeva pays little attention to the fact that drives are not simply antistructural quotas of affective force, but are actually circuits involving multiple components. (In Lacanian terms, they are "montages" of heterogeneous elements, Borromean knots of differing threads.) Drives contain, within their own internal organization, what Kristeva would consider to be symbolic constituents—the representational order of aims and objects—thus problematizing her equation of drives with the semiotic exclusively.

In spite of her caveats about the immanence of the semiotic to the symbolic, the weight of Kristeva's descriptive emphasis characterizes the drives as a semiotic force in conflict with a distinguishable symbolic. Drives might be immanent to the symbolic in this account, but they are still posited as being different-in-kind from this structural, formal level. In essence, Kristeva here reduplicates the traditional Freudian conception of *Trieb* as a libidinal entity at odds with both conscious thought and an external, sociohistorical reality—the drives versus the ego, the libidinal

*Innenwelt* versus the prohibitory *Umwelt* of civilization, and so on. In homogenizing the drives by consigning them to the semiotic alone, Kristeva, like the later Freud, forfeits the possibility of grasping the conflict internal to each and every drive. Only by fully embracing the implicit consequences of Freud's 1915 segmentation of *Trieb* into four operational constituents existing on heterogeneous levels is one able to posit this internal conflict between these constituents.

## §4 Slavoj Žižek—The Return of the Undead Real

In the wake of Freud's second topography, the thematic centrality of the *Todestrieb* seemingly weds *Trieb* to the fact of human finitude. If all drives participate in the labor of *Thanatos,* namely, if all drives inherently tend toward inorganicity, then *Trieb* is a reflection or embodiment of the individual's mortality. Žižek performs a surprising reversal of the terms in which this motif is expressed. The compulsive repetitiousness that Freud associates with the death drive is not indicative of a link to mortal finitude. Instead, this blind insistence of *Trieb* is closer to being an immortal, undead revenant that continually returns to haunt the subject.[31] Drives forcibly ignore the passage of time in their endless reiteration of demands for the repetition of a fixed, frozen past:

> This notion of a spectral undead existence also allows us to account for the fundamental paradox of the Freudian/Lacanian death drive: like the Kierkegaardian sickness unto death, the death drive is not the mark of human finitude, but its very opposite, the name for 'eternal (spectral) life,' the index of a dimension in human existence that persists for ever, beyond our physical death, and of which we can never rid ourselves . . .
>
> [F]or Lacan, the death drive is precisely the ultimate Freudian name for the dimension traditional metaphysics designated as that of *immortality*—for a drive, a 'thrust,' which persists beyond the (biological) cycle of generation and corruption, beyond the 'way of all flesh.' (Žižek 1999b, 293–294)

Unlike instincts, which coincide with the natural rhythms of the biological organism and its environment, drives are compelling/compulsive forces completely divorced from such organically regulated cycles. Paying no heed to the well-being of the mortal individual, drives insist on an indefinite series of reinstantiations of a given state of affairs, even when such

a recurrence is detrimental to the existence of the finite subject. With their strong links to an unconscious that is ignorant of its own mortality, drives refuse to be cognizant of the weakness of the flesh. ("Smoke!" although it corrodes the lungs, "Drink!" although it damages the liver, and so on.) In conformity with this theme, Žižek also speaks of drives as a Kierkegaardian "sickness unto death." *Trieb* is a parasite that, while deriving its vital energy from the body of the individual, nonetheless drives this same body toward death through its uncompromising quest for *jouissance*.[32]

Through his development of certain themes in Lacan, Žižek identifies two forms of the *Todestrieb*—the recurrent insistence of the bodily Real (the undead, immortal "lamella" as the life-substance of *jouissance*[33]) and the mortifying, cadaverizing effect of the Symbolic colonization of the libidinal *corps* (that is, the hijacking of the direction of the drives by the play of signifiers in the unconscious). For Žižek, this is a difference between being "alive while dead" (the persistence of the bodily Real) and "dead while alive" (the Symbolic production of a *corps morcelé*):

> [T]he space of the death drive . . . according to Lacan, is the space between the two deaths, symbolic and real. For a human being to be 'dead while alive' is to be colonized by the 'dead' symbolic order; to be 'alive while dead' is to give body to the remainder of Life-Substance which has escaped the symbolic colonization ('lamella'). What we are dealing with here is thus the split . . . between the 'dead' symbolic order which mortifies the body and the non-symbolic Life-Substance of *jouissance.* (Žižek 1997b, 89)

If one assumes that the death drive is a general metapsychological characterization of all drives, then Žižek's comments reveal that *Trieb* is a function caught in an antinomic gap between two separate orders: Epitomized as *Todestrieb,* drive is, at one and the same time, the unmasterable "thrust" of the Real body as well as the overdetermining *automaton* of the Symbolic structures dictating the course of the libidinal economy.[34] This bivalence of *Trieb* demands a theory that takes into account an internal split, a dehiscence between Real and Symbolic.

Furthermore, this splitting of the (death) drive along the lines of the Real–Symbolic distinction permits recognizing two separate forms of repetition. On the one hand, as already highlighted by reference to the Lacanian myth of the lamella, the quasi-somatic force of the drives is a compulsive insistence incapable of being tamed by the regulations of the symbolic order and its prohibitory laws concerning enjoyment. This amounts to drive repetition in the Real. On the other hand, at the level of

sublimation and object-choice, a contingent, external series of signifying marks—the vicissitudes of the Lacanian *Trieb* are governed by the unary traits of objects permitting the sublimation of the drives, that is, those features (whether phenomenological–Imaginary or structural–Symbolic) electing a particular entity to play a surrogate role for *das Ding*—leads the drives along the twisting paths of perpetual displacement and recontextualization. This represents drive repetition in terms of the Symbolic. Does this leave unanswered a chicken-and-egg type question? Is the bodily Real of the drives ultimately responsible for repetition compulsion, or is it that the Symbolic overcoding of the body introduces this effect?

Žižek's Hegelian handling of the relationship between the Real and the Symbolic is essential to resolving this inquiry into the origins of repetition. In other words, drive repetition is a manifestation of a Real that is simultaneously "presupposed" and "posed" by the Symbolic. The somatic, corporeal dimension of drive is, in one sense, a retroactive presupposition of psychoanalytic theory—because a recurrent pattern is discernible in an analysand's lived history, a "force" responsible for this iteration is assumed to be active (the drive's source and pressure, the libido, cathexes, and so on). Drive is "presupposed" as an archaic, primal substance, existing prior to the adult context in which it manifests itself.

In another sense, drive is "posed" in that two restrictions on the metapsychological hypostatization of this presupposed "Real energy" dictate conceiving of it as a postulate formulated strictly within the confines of a Symbolic–structural system: One, the observing analyst never has direct, unmediated access to strictly physical constituents of libidinal life (they are simply posited by the theoretical necessities of analytic interpretation); two, repetition per se is visible exclusively to the extent that distinctively nonsomatic elements (object-choices, mnemic traces, unary traits, and so on) are repeated. Similarly, Freud himself confesses that the machinations of the compulsive *Todestrieb* are silent save for how they reveal themselves in the field of *Eros*. Hypothetically, the bodily Real of the drives is the catalyst activating the libidinal machine of psychical life (that is, drive repetition is the Real qua presupposed by the Symbolic). But, this Real can be outlined negatively, as a corporeal lost cause, exclusively insofar as its patterns of recurrence are Symbolically delineated (that is, drive repetition is the Real qua posed by the Symbolic). Žižek maintains that, within the symbolic order, the Real of *Trieb* expresses itself as an uncompromising demand, namely, a quasi-somatic insistence (drive-pressure) issuing from an erogenous zone (drive-source). The Symbolic aspect of this Real insistence is dual: The erogenous zone itself is specified by the "signifiers of the big Other" (for example, during toilet training, the commands of the parents specify the libidinal significance of the anal orifice),

and the object-choices of the drive are contingent upon the workings of unary traits.[35]

And yet, elsewhere, Žižek appears to relegate *Trieb* strictly to the realm of the Real alone—"at the level of drive, the Real is directly drive itself" (Žižek 1997a, 82). The drives are a Real opposed to the Symbolic, instead of being inextricably intertwined with both categories. This restriction of the Lacanian scope of drive occurs when Žižek emphasizes the nature of the distinction between drive and desire. Desire is an eternally unsatisfied metonymical drifting from object to object, provoked by the loss of the Real Thing. Its emergence is conditioned by the birth of subjectivity itself. Drive is an asubjective, idiotic satisfaction that invariably finds what it's looking for:

> Desire is historical and subjectivized, always and by definition unsatisfied, metonymical, shifting from one object to another since I do not actually desire what I want. What I actually desire is to sustain desire itself, to postpone the dreaded moment of its satisfaction. Drive, on the other hand, involves a kind of inert satisfaction that always finds its way; drive is nonsubjectivized ('acephalous'). (Žižek 1997a, 80)

Subsequently, the claim is made that only desire lacks its proper object, while drive suffers no such deprivation—"insofar as lack precedes repetition and serves as its mobile, we are within the space of *desire,* whereas *drive* designates a repetitive movement not driven by a constitutive lack" (Žižek 1997a, 84). The drive is Real to the extent that it doesn't lack anything.

Žižek's means of distinguishing drive from desire relies on the Lacanian axiom that the Symbolic is responsible for introducing lack/absence into the Real. The clearest example of this axiom is the distinction between "privation" and "castration." In the Real, nobody is missing an organ. For example, speaking at the level of the Real, women simply have vaginas; in other words, they are not "missing" an organ, since their bodies are as they are. Lacan calls this privation, although this term carries negative connotations and, hence, isn't entirely suited to his purposes. Only with the advent of the Symbolic—when language splices up the Real, designates an organ as an isolated entity, transforms this thus-designated entity into a signifier, and therefore becomes capable of marking the "absence" of a penis (a "phallus," insofar as the penis is elevated to the level of a signifier) on a woman's body—can individuals be said to be "castrated."[36] In the Real, there is nothing more than a difference in organs with no common measure (it's like apples and oranges, like A and B). With the Symbolic's capacity for introducing an absence where there

was none before, the difference between A and B becomes the opposition of A and not-A (or, Φ and -Φ)—"The real hole of privation is precisely a thing which doesn't exist. The real being full by its nature, it's necessary, in order to make a real hole, to introduce a symbolic object there" (*SIV,* 250). This is why Jacques-Alain Miller states that, "nothingness enters reality through language" (Miller 1991, 32). The implication of Žižek's interpretation of the difference between drive and desire is that desire is what remains after the Symbolic intervenes in the libidinal economy, after the introduction of specific lacks into the Real.

In "The Abyss of Freedom," Žižek not only wishes to distinguish drive from desire, but also to maintain the specificity of drive by distinguishing it from instinct, hence making drive a middle term between instinct and desire. He asserts that there is no such thing as an unsublimated drive. If one subtracts the notion of sublimation from drive, all that remains is a biological instinct:

> [T]here is no 'direct' drive that is afterward sublimated, since the 'non-sublimated drive' is simply the biological instinct: *drive* designates the moment when an instinct is 'sublimated'—cut off from its natural point of satisfaction and attached to an object that acts as the stand-in for the impossible Thing—and, as such, condemned to the repetitive movement of encircling, never directly 'swallowing,' its object. (Žižek 1997a, 83)

Instincts evidently have unmediated access to their gratifying objects; no detour is necessary on the road to satisfaction. Drives, on the other hand, are always–already sublimated to the extent that they cannot directly reach *das Ding;* they must settle for objectival substitutes. And yet, isn't this inherent loss of the Real Thing characteristic of Lacanian desire? If both drive and desire involve the lack of *das Ding,* then what is the actual difference between the two terms?

The rectification of this enigma lies in Lacan's distinction between the goal and the aim of the drive. The goal of *Trieb* is to recover *das Ding* in its pure state. However, with the genesis of subjectivity proper, this goal becomes impossible. The Real Thing is forever after accessible strictly insofar as it is constituted as an Imaginary and/or Symbolic object, as *objet petit a.* At this level, both drive and desire are similar; they each remain fixated upon an unattainable goal, a mythical, fantasmatic satisfaction that can never be actualized. But, the difference resides in the fact that drives come to enjoy the very failure to reach the impossible goal, whereas desire is permanently dissatisfied with the inaccessibility of its goal. In *Trieb,* the movement of encircling the lost Thing (that is, the inadequate means to

the goal) is transformed into the same *jouissance* ostensibly sought in *das Ding* itself. Žižek writes:

> Desire is a metonymic sliding propelled by a lack, striving to capture the elusive lure: it is always, by definition, 'unsatisfied'. . . In opposition to this pursuit of the lost object which remains for ever 'elsewhere,' drive is in a sense *always-already satisfied:* contained in its closed circuit, it 'encircles' its object—as Lacan puts it—and finds satisfaction in its own pulsation, in its repeated failure to attain the object. (Žižek 1992b, 228–229)

With reference to Schelling's *Die Weltalter,* Žižek describes drive as a "rotary motion," an indefinite movement of revolving around the hole left by the absent Real Thing. Drives remain stuck in this cyclical orbit, being content with the enjoyment achieved in the repeated failure to attain their goal. Desire is different in that it isn't content to endlessly encircle its goal–Thing. Instead, it attempts to acquire substitutes equal to the inaccessible "x" around which *Trieb* gravitates. These substitutes come in many forms—dreams, fantasies, subliminatory object-choices, transferential relationships, and so on. Desire is frustrated again and again by the dissimilarities between its substitutes and that being substituted for in the first place.

Is desire really different-in-kind from drive? Must the two terms be completely separated? Isn't desire a vicissitude of the Lacanian drive? Before returning to Lacan in assessing the nature of the drive–desire couple, recalling some of Freud's remarks is useful. In Žižek's view, both drive and desire lack *das Ding;* in Freud's vocabulary, both have lost the archaic love-object. The key to distinguishing them lies in the idea of satisfaction and/or enjoyment: Drives enjoy the very futility of their quests, while desire is the unsatisfied restlessness resulting from these same quests. For Freud, the "drive-enjoyment" and "desire-dissatisfaction" pairs are simply a renaming of the difference between the unconscious and conscious registration of the activities of the drive. The unconscious, under the sway of the primary processes, enjoys the workings of *Trieb.* The conscious ego, on the other hand, experiences the manifestations of repressed drives as unpleasurable—"owing to the process of repression the pleasure that would have been expected from satisfaction had been transformed into unpleasure" (*SE* 20: 91). One psychical system's pleasure is simultaneously unpleasurable for another system. Or, as Freud might say of Lacanian desire, its essence lies in being "pleasure that cannot be felt as such."[37]

Even if one concedes that desire per se is not equivalent to the conscious unpleasure of the Freudian ego experienced after the fact of re-

pression—Lacan's concept encompasses a structural process linked with the formation of the split subject, and hence cannot be situated within a particular psychical register created as a result of this formative genesis—Lacan himself nonetheless implies that desire is a vicissitude of the drive. For Lacan, desire is commensurate with the loss of the archaic object-choice of drive qua *das Ding*. And, if Žižek is correct that drives too always–already lack their Thing, then drive is, in Žižekian parlance, the "vanishing mediator" between instinct and desire. That is, if Žižek is right that there is no such thing as an unsublimated drive, then drive is always–already desire, since desire is the Lacanian name for the sublimation of drive. In other words, one never encounters either instinct or drive in isolation from desire. As soon as instinct loses its natural object, once it is derailed from its automatic, organically regulated functioning, it immediately passes over into desire. Drive is the by-product of this transubstantiation of instinct into desire, namely, a Hegelian Real that stands between instinct and desire only after the accomplishment of the transition from instinct to desire. Instinct never loses its biologically determined, teleological goal; desire always loses its bearings, never finding its teleological goal. Like desire, drive has always–already lost the Real Thing, its proper telos. But, like instinct, it never loses its true aim, since the loss that perturbs desire becomes the very source of the drive's satisfaction. Drive is a remnant of the asubjective, instinctual regulator of gratifications, a leftover displaced into the sphere of human desire.

Finally, what about the temporal qualities of drive and desire? In *The Plague of Fantasies,* Žižek draws a brief but suggestive comparison between "the eternity of drive against the finitude of desire" (Žižek 1997b, 30). Drive is the perpetual encircling of the fixed, immobile place of *das Ding*. As such, it pays no attention to the passage of time. Desire, being equivalent to the diachrony effectuated through the metonymic drifting from object to object, is therefore, by contrast, temporal. Doesn't this indicate a fundamental incompatibility between drive and desire? Aren't these two functions inherently out of joint with each other, being split into a noumenal–synchronic and phenomenal–diachronic opposition? In *The Ticklish Subject,* Žižek reiterates the fact that drives, like desire, cannot access the Thing upon which they are fixated—"drive relies on a fundamental, constitutive *failure* . . . drive's self-affection is never fully self-enclosed, it relies on some radically inaccessible X that forever eludes its grasp—the drive's repetition is the repetition of a failure" (Žižek 1999b, 304). But, a crucial series of related questions remains: Why do the drives fail? What is responsible for this constitutive inability to reach the Real goal? Why is the drive-object necessarily an elusive "x"?

The solution lies in internalizing what Žižek conceives of as an an-

tagonism between atemporal drive and temporal desire within the order of *Trieb*. That is to say, the incompatibility between the "rotary motion" of the drives and the metonymic, diachronous sliding of desire is a tension within drive itself. The cyclical (a)temporality of drive is actually symptomatic of the axis of iteration. The dialectical temporality of desire—the *Aufhebung* of the past in/by the present—describes the operation of the drive at the level of the axis of alteration. Why is the repetition of *Trieb* necessarily a failure? The axis of iteration demands the recurrent instantiation of the primordial experience/form of enjoyment that gave birth to the drive in the first place (that is, the reinstantiation of *das Ding*, the return to a mode of experience in which, for example, the breast isn't encountered as a constituted "object" of subjectivized experience). This demand is futile, since it is unavoidably mediated through the axis of alteration: The objects met with are (temporalized) modifications/distortions of *das Ding* (and, on top of this, such factors as the reality of Oedipal Law inhibit the aims of the drive). The temporal conflict between the drive axes offers an explanation for exactly why it is that *Trieb* repeatedly fails, namely, why this driving force is a perpetual motor behind the formations of the unconscious.

# Notes

## Preface

1. *SE* 4: 262.
2. Sophocles 1991, 103 (lines 584–586).
3. *SE* 4: 262–263.
4. *SE* 13: 143.
5. Euripides 1959, 59 (lines 1183–1185).

## One

1. *SE* 16: 284–285.
2. Lacan 1977e, 114.
3. Lacan 1977d, 57.
4. Derrida 1978b, 212.
5. *SE* 5: 552–553.
6. *SE* 7: 231.
7. *SE* 12: 168.
8. Derrida 1978b, 225.
9. *SE* 5: 573.
10. *SE* 4: 277–278.
11. Anzieu 1986, 405.
12. Johnston 1999b, 100.
13. *SE* 2: 133.
14. *SE* 14: 186–187; *SE* 14: 296.
15. Boothby 1991, 4.
16. Wallwork 1991, 20, 23.
17. Pontalis 1981b, 108–109.
18. Kant 1996, 639–640 (A 671/B 699).
19. Kant 1996, 645 (A 680/B 708).
20. Kant 1996, 411 (A 384).
21. *SXI,* 29–30.
22. *SXI,* 22.
23. Lacan 1990a, 5.

24. Laplanche 1981b, 86.
25. *SE* 14: 187; *SE* 18: 28; Laplanche 1999f, 238–239.
26. Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 204–205.
27. Green 2000b, 139.

## Two

1. Roudinesco 1990, 350.
2. *SXI,* 3.
3. Fink 1997a, 17.
4. *SIII,* 299.
5. Lacan 1977d, 100.
6. Roudinesco 1990, 322–323.
7. Lacan 1988, 4–5.
8. Lacan 1988, 16.
9. Fink 1996b, 383–384.
10. Lacan 1988, 11.
11. Lacan 1988, 11–12.
12. Žižek 1993, 75.
13. Lacan 1988, 12.
14. *SVIII,* 417–418.
15. Lacan 1975a, 41–42; Roudinesco 1997, 288.
16. Lacan 1977c, 18–19.
17. Borch-Jacobsen 1991, 217.
18. Marini 1992, 43–44.
19. Žižek 1996b, 93–94.
20. Lemaire 1977, 81.
21. Johnston 1999c, 300.
22. Žižek 1997b, 218.
23. *SV,* 14–15.
24. *SXVII,* 34–35.
25. Marini 1992, 43.
26. Hegel 1977, 383 (§631).
27. Kant 1996, 450–451 (A 416–417/B 444).
28. Kant 1996, 525 (A 517/B 545).
29. Kant 1996, 539 (A 538/B 566).
30. *SX,* 6/12/63; Lacan 1990a, 36.
31. *SXI,* 54–55.
32. Nasio 1998, 47.
33. Johnston 1999a, 52, 58.
34. *SE* 20: 166–167.
35. *SXI,* 52; Fink 1995b, 225.
36. *SXI,* 80.

37. Soler 1996, 64.
38. Žižek 1989, 132.
39. Fink 1996a, 176.
40. *SII,* 183–184.
41. Cutrofello 1997, 19.
42. *SII* [Fr.], 218.
43. *SII,* 47.
44. Fink 1996a, 182–183.
45. Lacan 1977f, 153.
46. Plato 1995, 79–80 (lines 274 E–275 B); Derrida 1981, 109.
47. Nasio 1998, 57.
48. Lacan 1995a, 267.
49. *SXIX,* 2/9/72; Roudinesco 1997, 363.
50. Bergson 1910, 98.
51. *SXII,* 1/13/65.
52. *SE* 14: 174–175.
53. Fink 1995a, 144.
54. Roudinesco 1997, 377.
55. Roustang 1990, 97.
56. Marini 1992, 70.
57. Turkle 1978, 236.
58. *SXXVI,* 1/9/79.
59. *SXXVI,* 2/20/79.
60. Heidegger 1993, 273–274.
61. Marini 1992, 247.
62. *SXII,* 12/9/64.
63. Žižek 1989, 55–56.
64. Ogilvie 1987, 30–31.
65. *SXXVI,* 12/19/78.
66. *SXXII,* 12/10/74.

## Three

1. Gay 1988, 45–46.
2. Vaysse 1999, 22–23.
3. *SE* 20: 47.
4. Boothby 1991, 187.
5. Julien 1994, 109.
6. Milner 1995, 40–41.
7. *SXI,* 37.
8. Lacan 1995a, 268; Dolar 1998, 15.
9. *SIII,* 73.
10. Žižek 1993, 69.

11. Milner 1991, 29.
12. Koyré 1958, 99.
13. Lacan 1989, 4–5.
14. Kuhn 1962, 23–24.
15. Foucault 1972, 182–183.
16. *SXI,* 43; Lacan 1989, 5.
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18. Sipos 1994, 9; Le Gaufey 1996, 43.
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Adrian Johnston is an interdisciplinary research fellow in psychoanalysis and a lecturer in philosophy at Emory University. He is also a clinical training candidate at the Emory Psychoanalytic Institute. His published work focuses primarily on Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis, the history of philosophy, and contemporary theory.

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